


# THE LIVING JFK



\$295

AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY BY Robert N. Webb  
WITH A TRIBUTE BY President Lyndon B. Johnson



# THE LIVING JFK

By ROBERT N. WEBB

*With a Tribute by*

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

ENID LAMONTE MEADOWCROFT:

*Supervising Editor*

*Illustrated with Photographs*

The day he was born . . . the years he spent at boarding school . . . his struggle to make the Harvard varsity team . . . his exploits as captain of the famed PT-109 . . . his marriage to the charming Jacqueline Bouvier . . . his office as President of the United States . . . his tragic assassination. . . . These were important milestones in the life of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

A member of a large, closely knit family, young Jack grew up with the finest of principles. He was always encouraged toward highly ambitious undertakings even though his family's vast fortune could have afforded him an easier life. Known for his fiery spirit and his willingness to accept a challenge, Jack Kennedy earned the admiration of everyone who knew him. His fearless determination to match the skills of his older and stronger brother in sports and studies drove him onward — to be voted "most likely to succeed" — and to success!

An inspiration to readers young and old, a book to read and reread — a touching and dramatic story of the boy and the man who will live forever in our minds and in our hearts.

GROSSET & DUNLAP *Publishers*

NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

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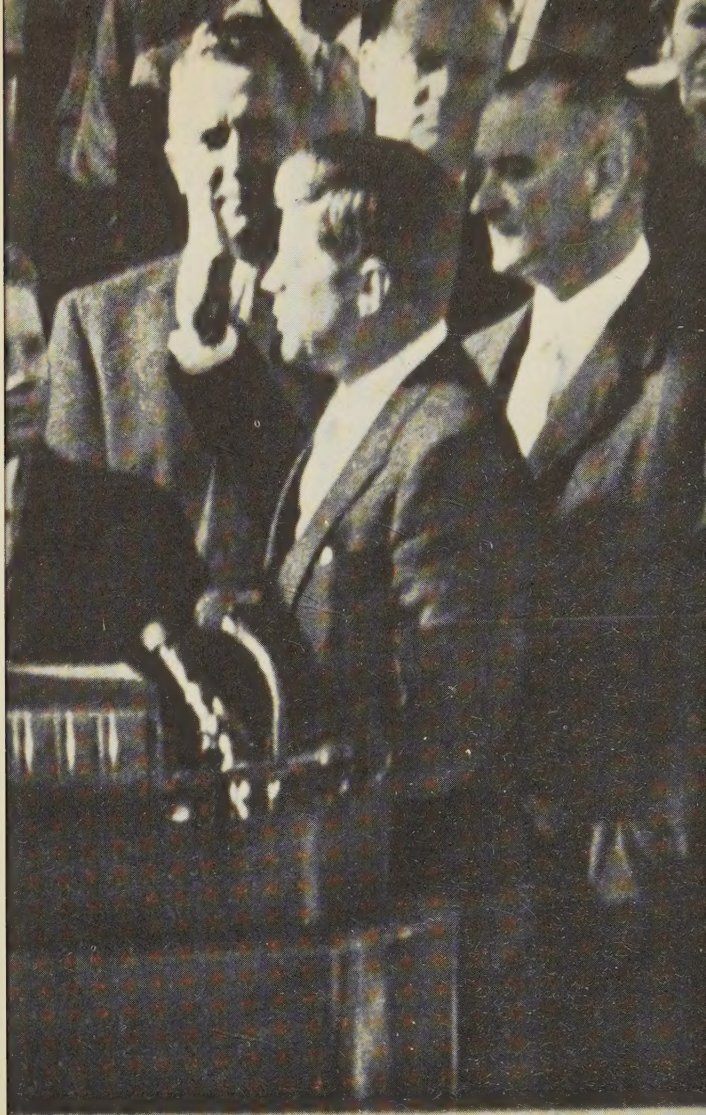
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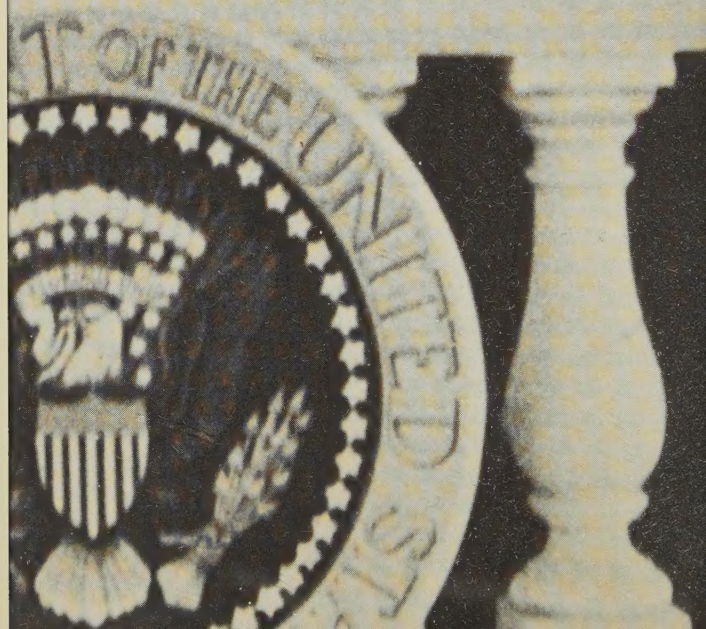
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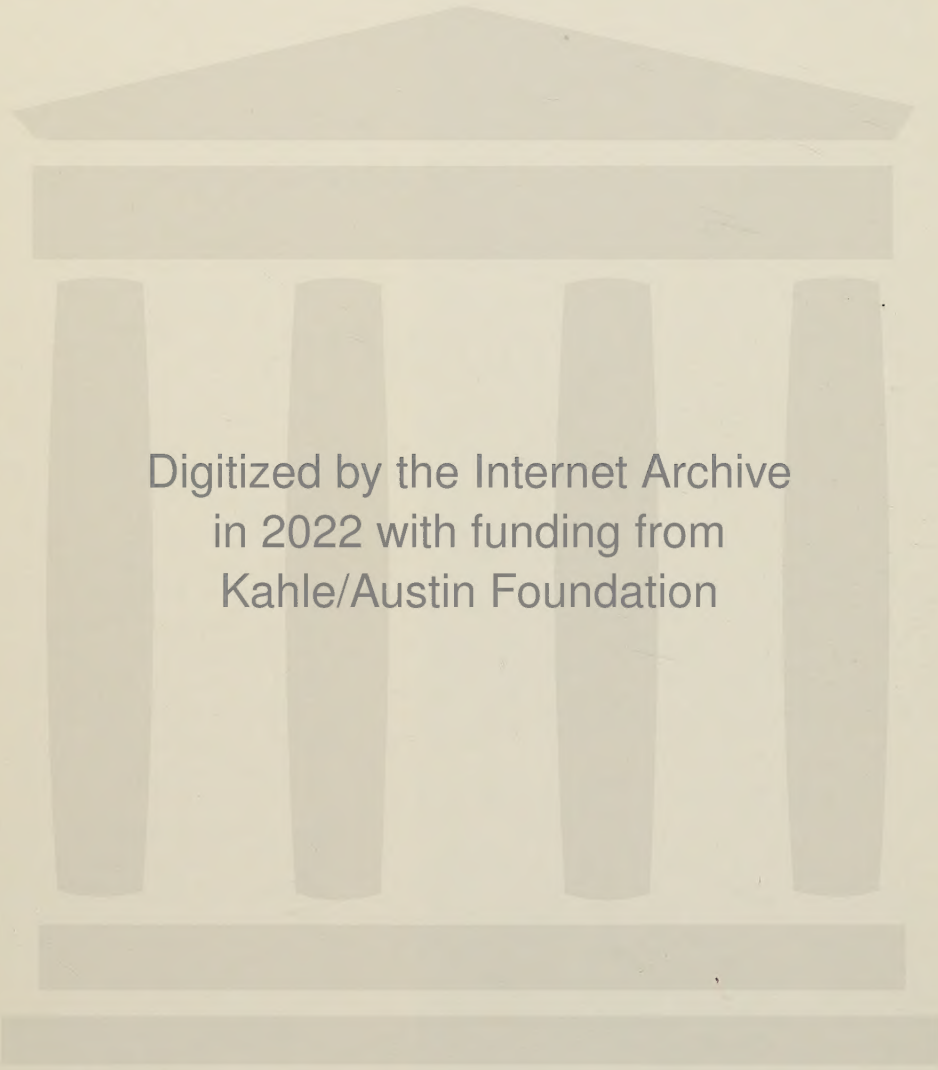
White House Office administered by Chief Justice Earl Warren.  
President Lyndon B. Johnson.





*“Ask not what your country  
can do for you –  
ask what you can do  
for your country.”*





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By ROBERT N. WEBB

WITH A TRIBUTE BY  
PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

GROSSET & DUNLAP • *Publishers* NEW YORK

*President Kennedy's face is serious and resolute as he addresses  
the UN General Assembly in September of 1961.*

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## A TRIBUTE

President Kennedy had a very special meaning to the young and particularly the young at heart. He inspired them by his eloquence. He energized them through his own vitality. But the most important contribution to all of us, his real legacy to our country, was his persuasive argument to the young people of our country to enter the field of politics and government. He regarded politics as one of the highest forms of human endeavor and he considered service to his country second to none in the fulfillment of a meaningful life and he served his country in many ways. He scorned those who degraded politics or through their actions debased it.

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

*The White House, Washington, D.C.  
February 19, 1964*





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*Little John Kennedy as a baby sits on his mother's lap. Left, sister Rosemary; right, "big" brother Joe.*





## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Race Is On*

It was a hot summer afternoon in 1927. Heat waves shimmered upward from the sidewalk. The two brothers stood tensely, both boys gripping the handlebars of their bicycles firmly.

"Sure you want to race me, Jack?" the bigger boy asked.

"Any time, Joe. Right now's all right with me."

"Okay, Jack. But I'll beat you."

"We'll see about that," Jack answered calmly.

"Big" Joe Kennedy, Jr. was twelve. Jack was two years younger than his brother—and skinny. The muscles in his arms and legs didn't bulge like Joe's. They were more like steel wires. Jack's thin face was topped by a thick mop of curly brown hair. His gray-blue eyes were steely with a will to win.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Joe asked.

"I'm ready," Jack replied in a quiet voice.

Joe turned to his sister Rosemary.

"You start us off, Rose," Joe said.

"All right," eight-year-old Rosemary replied. She was surrounded by three other Kennedy sisters and one brother. They were Kathleen, who was seven, Eunice, who was six, and Patricia, who was three. Their faces shone with excitement as they waited for the start of the race. One-year-old Robert slept blissfully in his baby carriage.

The children had gathered on the lawn in front of the comfortable frame house in Brookline, Massachusetts, where the Kennedy family lived.

"Why don't we do this, Joe?" said Jack. "I'll ride around the block one way. You go the other. Then we won't get in each other's way. And the first one back to this spot is the winner."

"Suits me. Are you ready, Rose?"

Rosemary nodded her head. "I'll say one, two, three, go!"

The brothers pointed their bicycles in opposite directions, all set to leap on from a running start.



"Ready?" Rosemary asked.

The two boys nodded their heads.

"One . . . two . . . three . . . GO!"

The race was on. Jack ran as fast as his legs would go, bent over his bicycle, gripping the handlebars. He leaped on the seat and began pedaling faster and faster.

Joe headed the other way. Both boys had gotten off to a good start.

The four girls rushed to the sidewalk. They looked first one way, then the other. They saw Joe reach the corner and swing around it out of sight to the right. The girls spun around just in time to see the back wheel of Jack's bike as it disappeared around the corner to the left.

Jack cut his corner sharply. He felt for a moment that his bicycle would skid from beneath him. A strong downward thrust on the left pedal straightened the bicycle up. Jack began pedaling more rapidly. He was really flying now.

"I've got to win," he said to himself, his teeth clamped together in determination. "I just won't let Joe beat me again."

That morning, Joe had beaten Jack in a foot race. And the day before, it had been Joe's team that had won in a baseball game.

The boys had been rivals from the days when young Jack was first able to toddle around. They were friendly rivals, but neither boy ever gave an inch to the other.

Both boys liked all sports. They had learned to ski and play tennis when quite young. Jack had been able to swim almost as soon as he could walk. In swimming, he was already beginning to do better than his older brother. But he could not do as well as Joe at football and baseball because he was younger and small for his age. Jack tried to make up for this by a fiery determination to win.

In a football helmet so large it almost covered his eyes, Jack had played on the younger boys' team at the Dexter School, which was six blocks from his home. In these after-school games, Joe was almost always the first one picked when it came time to choose sides. Jack was always getting banged around by the bigger boys, but he never failed to come back for more.

It was at home, though, where the rivalry between the brothers was the greatest. There wasn't a day when they didn't race, wrestle, or play touch football. Victory was sweet to Jack when it came. But he did not defeat Joe very often.

"This time I'll beat him." Jack thought, pedaling hard.

Jack braked slightly so he could round the next corner. He looked up as he straightened out and saw his brother Joe coming toward him.

With his head down and his back bent, Jack stood on his pedals and pumped furiously. He figured they were about even in the race so far. Joe might be a little bit ahead, but not much.

As the two boys approached the middle of the block, Jack looked up briefly. His face turned white. Joe, with *his* head down, was directly in his path. They were on a collision course.

Jack tried to swerve to one side, but it was too late. The brothers crashed head on. The front wheel of Jack's bicycle caught in the left pedal of Joe's. Both bicycles crashed in a tangle. Jack's bicycle swung around and he was tossed over the handlebars into the spinning rear wheel of Joe's overturned bicycle.

*Jack and his brother Joe (in circle) both made the first team in football at Dexter School in 1927.*





Joe was flung free. Jack lay under the twisted wrecks of both bicycles. Pedals were still whirling. One of them hit his left arm, and cut it deeply. Reaching out, Jack caught his right hand in the spokes of the spinning back wheel of his own bicycle. He felt something sharp dig into his right leg. He didn't know what it was, but it hurt.

"Jack! Jack! Are you hurt?" Joe jumped up from the ground where he had been thrown. He leaped to his brother's side and started to lift the bicycles off Jack's body.

"Take it easy, Joe. I'm kind of cut up."

"You sure are." Joe lifted one bicycle off his brother and tossed it aside. Then, very carefully, he removed the second bicycle.

"See if you can stand up," he said.

Jack moved slowly. He tested first one leg, then the other. He placed his right hand on the ground to push himself up.

"Ouch!" It was the hand that had been caught in the spokes.

Slowly, Jack got to his feet. He poked at his ribs. He raised his arms. He moved both legs.

"Guess I'm still in one piece," Jack said after his inspection.

"You're lucky you didn't break every bone in your body," Joe told him. "But you've got some bad cuts. You're bleeding. Come on. I'll get you home fast."

He put a protective arm around his brother's shoulders. Jack shrugged it off.

"I'm all right," he said.

The brothers trudged slowly back around the block. Jack ached all over, and the cuts on his arm, leg, and hand pained fiercely.

The four girls ran to meet them as they rounded the corner. Rosemary shrieked in horror when she saw Jack. Kathleen, who was called "Kick," wailed at the sight of the blood on her brother's face. There was a big smear where Jack had used his injured hand to brush the hair out of his eyes.

Small Eunice and tiny Patricia looked at their brother with saucer-round eyes. They were scared.

The children's mother met the boys at the door. She put her arms around Jack in spite of the blood that was dripping onto her clothes. Then she led him into the kitchen and telephoned at once to the family doctor. Next she put water on the stove to boil.

"Get some clean towels and bandages," she ordered Rosemary. "And you, Kick, see that the water doesn't boil over."

Joe leaned against a kitchen cabinet. The other children stood wide-eyed and silent; they couldn't take their eyes off Jack.

"What happened?" Mrs. Kennedy asked.

"It was an accident, Mother," Jack replied.

"We were having a race," Joe cut in, "on our bikes."

"And we just ran into each other," Jack said. "It wasn't anyone's fault."

Twenty minutes later the doctor arrived. Skillfully and quickly he worked on Jack, stitching up his cuts.

"That ought to take care of you, young man," the doctor said when he had finished. "Just you be careful and take it easy for the next few days. We don't want to reopen those cuts. You'll be all right in a week or so."

There had been no winner of the bicycle race. But Jack was certainly a loser. It took twenty-eight stitches to sew up Jack's cuts. Joe was not even scratched.





*"Honey Fitz," former Mayor of Boston, Mass., the Kennedy children's beloved Grandpa Fitzgerald.*

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Home Runs and History*

Mrs. Kennedy was at the writing desk in the den when her son Jack came in.

"What is it, Jack?"

"Couldn't I go out and play today? I can't feel those old cuts at all. Anyway, the doctor took out the last stitches two days ago."

"Let me look at them." Jack's mother carefully inspected the fading cuts.

"I think you can play, Jack," she said. "But do be careful. No more accidents. Please!" She smiled at her son.

"Thanks, Mother." Jack turned and ran out of the den.

Ten days had passed since the bicycle race. Jack had spent most of those days quietly, reading on the porch and walking around the yard.

Mrs. Kennedy turned back to the card catalogue on her desk. It was divided into seven sections. One section was for each of her seven children. She had been putting a card in the section headed by Jack's name when he had interrupted her. She had just made a note of the date his stitches had been removed.

Mrs. Kennedy kept a careful record of all her children's illnesses, their accidents, and their doctor's appointments. She was a loving mother, and a busy one with seven children to care for.

Jack joined his brother and sisters on the lawn in the back yard. Soon he and Joe were playing tag with their sisters, and Joe was as hard to catch as ever. Little Patricia had wandered away from the game toward the front of the house. Suddenly the children heard her cry in a high, squeaky voice:

"Grandpa! Grandpa!"

The children raced around the house to the front yard. Jack hurled himself into his grandfather's arms.

"Hear! Hear!" Grandpa laughed, hugging each child in turn. Grandpa was a jolly man, and he loved his grandchildren as much as they loved him.



He was Mrs. Kennedy's father. His name was John F. Fitzgerald, but in Boston, which was nearby, many people called him "Honey Fitz." Twice he had been elected the mayor of Boston, and Bostonians still loved him dearly.

Mrs. Rose Kennedy greeted her father with a glass of lemonade. She brushed her clinging children from his coattails. Then the family, from Grandpa down to little Bobby, gathered in the shade-drawn living room.

Grandpa "Honey Fitz" always had a plentiful supply of stories and songs. And for the next half hour, the Kennedy living room rocked with laughter.

"No more. No more right now," Grandpa said after a rollicking song. He looked at his oldest grandson, Joe, then turned his eyes to Jack.

Jack felt sure that he knew what was coming. He hoped he was right.

"How about taking in the ball game this afternoon?" Grandpa winked at Jack.

A loud "Yes," from Joe and Jack drowned out the protests of their sisters, who wanted Grandpa to stay with them.

"The Boston Red Sox are playing the Yankees."

"We'll beat the Yankees, won't we, Grandpa?" Jack asked.

"Well now, much as I hope so, I have to be honest. This looks like another Yankee year. If we pitch Danny MacFeyden, we'll have a good chance. He's a great pitcher—one of the best the Red Sox ever had."

"Will Babe Ruth be playing?" Joe asked.

"He surely will. And Lou Gehrig, too."

"I'd like to see Babe Ruth hit a home run," Jack said. "But I want the Sox to win."

Just before two o'clock, Grandpa Fitzgerald and his two grandsons took their seats in a field box at Fenway Park in Boston. From all sides, shouts of welcome greeted the man who had once been Boston's mayor. The band struck up "Sweet Adeline," which was his favorite song. And, during the game, many visitors came to the box to see him. They were men who had campaigned with him.

One of them clapped Jack on the shoulder. "Is this the lad who used to go with you when you made speeches, Fitzie?" he asked.

"That's right," said Grandpa. "He listened to my campaign speeches when he was only six."

"Are you going to make him a politician, too?" asked the visitor.

"You can bet all the beans in Boston on that," said Grandpa. "Both boys are going to have a part in running the government. They're going right to the top."

Just then Babe Ruth hit his second home run clear out of the ball park. The crowd cheered wildly and the boys heard no more talk about politics until the game was over.

They were used to hearing about politics, for their other grandfather, Mr. Patrick J. Kennedy, had also held public offices. Often on Sundays they piled into the Model T Ford with their parents and some of the younger children and drove to Winthrop to see him. They made other excursions, too, to visit the historic places in and around Boston.

"Where shall we go today?" Mother Kennedy asked her children one morning right after breakfast.

Excited voices filled the room as the children had a lively discussion. Each child wanted to go to a different place.

"How about Bunker Hill?" Mother Kennedy suggested.

"Goody! Goody! I like to climb hills," little Kathleen cried out.

"It's not a hill for climbing," Mother Kennedy said, laughing. "There's a famous monument there we want to see."

"What's it famous for?" Rosemary asked.

"We'll see when we get there."

Joe and Jack, Rosemary and Kathleen set out with their mother for Bunker Hill. The younger children were left behind with the nursemaid.

On their way to the streetcar line, Mrs. Kennedy and the children entered the Catholic church where they were members. The Kennedys went to church every day. Mrs. Kennedy wanted to give her children the feeling that God and religion were a part of their daily lives, and not just something for Sundays only.

It was fun riding the streetcar down Commonwealth Avenue to Park Square and the Boston Common. The Kennedys got off at Park Square to change to a trolley that would take them to the Bunker Hill monument, which is located on Breed's Hill, where the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought.

The four children and their mother looked up at the tall monument near the top of Breed's Hill.

"What's the monument for, Mother?" Kathleen asked.

"Do you know, Joe?" asked Mrs. Kennedy. "Or you, Jack?"



"There was a big battle here," Jack replied.

"A long time ago," Joe added.

"Who fought in the battle?" Rosemary asked.

"The Americans fought the British. It was at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. About a hundred and fifty years ago," Mrs. Kennedy explained.

"Who won the war?" Kathleen asked.

"The Americans. And when the war was over, the Colonies didn't belong to England any more. The Americans were free," Mrs. Kennedy answered.

The Kennedy children learned many of their history lessons by visiting the places where early American history was made. They made a trip to Plymouth Rock, which marks the shore where the Pilgrims landed. They visited the site of the Boston Tea Party, where Americans dressed like Indians dumped British tea into Boston Harbor, because they did not want to pay a tax on tea. They visited Concord and Lexington, where the first battle of the Revolution was fought. They saw the Old North Church any number of times and knew the story of Paul Revere's ride as well as they knew nursery rhymes.

*Old North Church where the lantern hung to warn that the British were coming.*

*On the Concord battlefield stands the statue of a minuteman.*

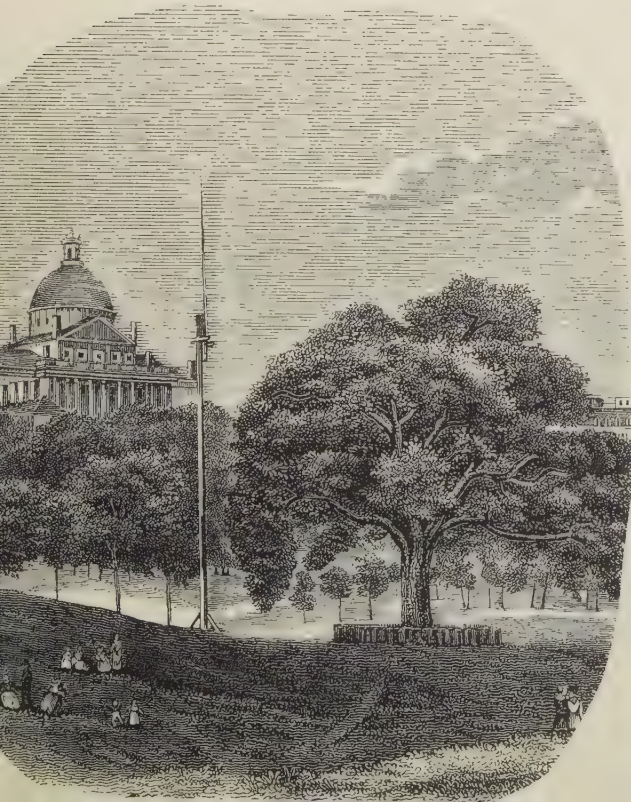


Mrs. Kennedy also wanted her children to know about the history of their own times. The Boston newspapers and the *New York Times* were delivered daily to the Kennedys' home. Both Jack and Joe were eager readers. When they came to something they did not understand, their mother read the article to them. She would explain the subject. Then she would question the boys afterward to be sure they had understood.

The four children were tired when they reached home after the day at Bunker Hill. But their spirits shot up when they entered the house. Their father was home! He was away a great deal these days, and they missed him. Now, he had just come back from spending a week in New York.

The days when Jack and his brothers and sisters lived in Brookline were pleasant ones. But they were drawing to an end. Joseph Kennedy was becoming a very rich man. He had found that he must spend most of his time in New York, and he did not like to be away from his family so much. He felt that there was only one answer to this problem. The family would have to move to a place near New York. Then he could spend every night at home, instead of just weekends.

*Across Boston Common the Statehouse can be seen above the trees.*



*The monument on Breed's Hill.*





## CHAPTER THREE

### *New Home, New Schools*

Jack Kennedy pressed his face against the car window to watch the passing scenery. The Kennedys had said farewell to their friends in Brookline and were on their way to New York. Jack's father had arranged to have them travel in a private railroad car.

The private car was coupled into a regular train of the New Haven Railroad. Now they were speeding along the shore of Connecticut. The train slowed as it drew near the bridge over the Connecticut River at New London.

Jack's interest quickened as the train rumbled over the bridge. On his right, up the river about a mile, he caught a glimpse of the United States Navy's submarine base at Groton. A destroyer was moving slowly toward the bridge. Sails of small craft, like white polka dots against the blue-green waters, dotted the river.

"One day I'll have my own sailboat," Jack thought, adding quickly, "I hope. And maybe I'll get to handle a big speedboat."

Jack Kennedy would do plenty of sailing in the years ahead. Some day he would also pilot a powerful speedboat in the service of his country, and that would almost cost him his life.

The train paused briefly at New London, then plunged onward toward New York. Now it followed the curving shore line of Long Island Sound. White caps flecking the waters of the Sound took Jack's eye from time to time. But although his eyes were turned toward the water he really wasn't thinking about what he was seeing. His thoughts ran back and forth between the happy life he had just left and the challenge of the new life he was approaching.

Saying good-by to his neighbors in Brookline and to the boys at Dexter School hadn't been easy. Now he would have to make new friends and go to a new school.

"Making new friends won't be any easier than saying good-by to the old ones," Jack thought. He felt the same shyness that any ten-year-old boy feels at the thought of entering a new school.

Toward the front of the car, Mr. Kennedy carefully folded the newspaper he had just finished reading and put it on the seat beside him. Mrs. Kennedy was surrounded by her daughters. Jack could hear their high voices piping out a tune now and again. He saw his father get up and come toward him. Mr. Kennedy stopped for a few moments to talk to Joe, who was sitting alone. Then he came on down the aisle and joined Jack.

"I didn't want you to get lonesome, son." Mr. Kennedy smiled and sat down. "Aren't you going to join your brother or your sisters?"

"Sure. I was just thinking," Jack replied.

"About moving to a new home?" his father asked.

"I guess so," said Jack. "Yes, I was. I really liked Brookline."

"And you'll like your new home, too."

Father and son were silent for a few moments as the train sped along.

"It will be a new life for you, Jack," Mr. Kennedy said. "A new challenge. You've never run away from a challenge. You've always welcomed the chance to try new things."

"It will be exciting," Jack replied. "I guess I was just kind of sad about leaving Grandpa and all my friends."

"You'll get over that quickly enough. There will be many new things to do. And I know you'll do them right. You always have. That's what I want for you and for the whole family."

After a pause, Mr. Kennedy continued. "You know, Jack, what I've always believed in. What I want my children to believe in. I want you to come in first. I want my whole family to come in first." Mr. Kennedy shook his head. "Second place is failure. Just don't make any mistakes. And most important of all, remember this: Never do anything that you know is wrong. Always be honest. Stick to the fine principles your mother has given you."

"I'll try, Dad," Jack replied.

"I know you will, son, and you'll make it. You'll come out on top." Mr. Kennedy arose from the seat. "I really didn't mean to come up here and make a speech." He patted Jack on the shoulder and went back up the aisle.

Jack thought about what his father had just said. "Come in first. Second is failure." Jack grinned to himself. With brother Joe as his chief rival it was going to be very hard to come in first. And second was— No, he wouldn't even *think* that word.



The Kennedy family first settled in Riverdale-on-Hudson and later moved to Bronxville, a fashionable suburb of New York City. A large house, set in the middle of a rolling lawn dotted with shade and fruit trees, was their home.

To Jack and Joe, the big lawn and the roomy house were wide open fighting fields for their daily competitions.

"How 'bout it?" Joe asked Jack one morning as the children were in the living room, planning their day of fun. "Think you can take me on yet?" Joe had taken up wrestling, which was a perfect sport for his big-muscled body.

"I can sure try," Jack said.

The boys moved into the wide entrance hall. Their sisters scampered out of the way, up the curving staircase to get the best seats for the performance. There was Rosemary, now eleven, at the top. On the next step below, Kick looked down, excitement shining in her eyes. Next step down was Eunice, then Patricia. Toward the bottom sat Bobby, now four, his small hands clutching two of the banisters holding up the rail of the staircase, his small head pressed against them.

Jack and Joe circled one another cautiously. The first hold was the important one. Slight, wiry Jack sidestepped quickly as Joe rushed him, arms wide, trying to grab him in a bear hug. Both swirled around quickly. Now they leaned forward, heads hunched into shoulders, eyes firmly fixed on one another.

Cheers came from the stairway.

"Grab him, Jack," Kick cried out.

"Come on, Joe," from Patricia.

"Fight! Fight!" shouted Eunice.

Rosemary remained silent. She didn't like wrestling matches. She didn't like the contests her brothers were always having. She rarely took part in any of the sports and rough-and-tumble games her brothers and sisters held almost daily.

Little Bobby didn't say a thing, either. But his sharp eyes didn't miss a move.

Joe sprang forward again. This time his right arm caught Jack around the neck. In a split second, the boys were on the floor, rolling over and over. Joe was on top, trying to pin Jack's shoulders to the floor. Jack struggled, trying to wriggle loose. Joe put on more pressure. He had one of Jack's shoulder blades touching the floor. If he could force the other one down, victory would be his.

Both boys were panting, their breath coming in gulping gasps.

Suddenly, Jack relaxed. Joe forced Jack's other shoulder blade down. Jack twisted and lay on his side, letting his body go limp. He wanted to make Joe think he was through fighting. Joe released some of his pressure. All at once Jack tightened his muscles and tried with all his strength to throw Joe off. But Joe was too heavy and strong for him. Slowly, but surely, Joe forced him back to the floor until both of Jack's shoulder blades touched it.

"Got you! Give up?" Joe demanded.

Jack shook his head. "Never." Jack Kennedy would never give up, all his life.

"Say Uncle, then."

"Uncle."

The match was over. Joe had won. For a brief second Jack's thoughts flashed back to his father's words on the train ride down from Boston. "Come in first." "Second place is failure." Jack smiled as he got to his feet. One of these days he would come out on top. Joe wouldn't always win. But Jack had to admit Joe was good.

"How about a game of touch football?" Joe asked. The wrestling was already forgotten.

"We have to have lunch first," Rosemary called down from the staircase.

"Right after lunch," Joe said.

"Okay by me," Jack said. "I want Kick on my side."

"I'll take Pat," Joe answered quickly.

"I'll take Eunice."

"How about me?" came Bobby's squeaky voice.

"Okay, Bobby. You can be on my team," Joe said to his four-year-old brother.

Mr. Kennedy was always glad when he saw his children wrestling, racing, or playing rough games. He felt that such sports brought out the best in each child. And he expected every child to stand on his or her own feet no matter what the game might be.

The Kennedy children had many good friends, but they enjoyed doing things with one another. Even though they sometimes fought among themselves they presented a solid front to the outside world.

This pleased their father. He also encouraged every child to think for himself. When Jack or any of his brothers and sisters had a problem, the first question they asked themselves was "What shall I do about it



myself?"—not "What would someone else do?" The second question was "What will Dad think about how I have handled my problem?"

They always found out. There were long discussions with Dad on many problems. And when Dad was away on business trips, there was Mother to offer advice. Although it was a loud, noisy, competitive family, Mrs. Kennedy always had time to give each of her children individual attention.

Jack attended the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades at the Riverdale School. He wasn't a very good student, but he was always polite, and he worked hard enough so he didn't fail anything. His best subject was English history. He was well liked by other students and by his teachers.

The years at Riverdale passed quickly. When Jack was thirteen, the first big change in his life took place. One afternoon when he came home from school Kick told him that he was wanted in his father's study.

"What for?"

"I don't know," Kick answered. "Mother's in there, too."

Jack went in to join his parents.

"You're growing up, Jack," his father said. "Your mother and I feel it's time for you to get out in the world more. We've decided that next year you will go away to boarding school."

"Yes, sir," Jack answered in a weak voice. There wasn't anything else he could think to say. Many thoughts ran through his head. No longer would he have Kick, Pat, Eunice, Rosemary, Jean and Bobby as his closest friends. Joe had already gone off to boarding school. Jack knew that at boarding school, he would have to stand on his own feet, away from the family. One thought did flash in his mind. He would no longer be in the shadow of his big brother Joe.

"Well, son, what do you think?" asked his father.

"I guess it's a good idea, Dad," Jack said. "I know it is if you and Mother think so."

The school Jack's parents selected was Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut. It was a Catholic school, the only one of his own faith that Jack ever attended.

There were tears, hard-to-fight-back tears, when Jack's parents left him on the Canterbury campus the following September. Jack watched them climb into their car and drive away. He saw the car pass out of sight. Then he walked toward the dormitory which would now be his home. An entirely new life faced John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Football "Pracite"*

Jack sat in his room at Canterbury School, feeling pretty good about what he had done that day. He was writing a letter to his parents. In it he was telling them about the football game between Canterbury and Gunnery, another private boarding school. But he was making slow progress. Other boys kept interrupting him.

"Nice game you played today, Jack." A round face with glasses popped in and out of the doorway.

"You sure stopped one touchdown with that tackle," a redheaded boy said.

"Thanks a lot," Jack replied. He continued his letter writing.

"We played Gunnery," he wrote, "and much to my surprise I played quarterback for the whole game except three minutes. They licked us 32-0. They smeared us, and the score look like it. One fellow was running for a touchdown and I made a flying tackle and landed him. Everybody said I played a good game. One of their fellows was seventeen and when he hit you you stayed hit . . . I was nominated Captain but I could not have because I was on the second team."

Jack was thirteen for that game with Gunnery and its seventeen-year-old team member. Jack was as skinny as a stick. It had been a hard struggle for him to make the second team. He was the smallest boy who went out for the football squad. He was fearless, though, and threw himself into the game with a recklessness that caught the coach's eye. It was no wonder that Jack had been pleased when the coach had named him to play quarterback on the first team against Gunnery.

Now he shifted his body to try to get more comfortable. He ached all over, but he didn't mind. Those aches came from the game. He had had lumps and bruises from the first day of football practice, when he had written home: "I went out for football pracite today."

Football "pracite" had helped Jack get rid of his homesickness. He had been a lonely boy during the first week at boarding school. But he had made a lot of friends on the football field, and his homesickness had disappeared.



Jack finished his letter fifteen minutes before “lights out”—the signal for bedtime. He eased his aching body into bed and was asleep in a second.

A week later, Jack was writing another letter to his parents. He tried to write at least once a week.

“Hey, Jack. Is this yours?” A fellow member of the football team stood in the doorway, holding up a sweater.

“Yeah, Biff. Where’d you find it?” Jack asked.

“On the football field. Where you left it. Catch!”

Biff tossed the sweater across the room. Jack caught it and tossed it on the floor. It seemed to him that he was always forgetting things—his gloves, sweaters, caps—even his sneakers. But he had a good memory for what he read. He went back to his letter writing.

“We are reading *Ivanhoe* in English class,” he wrote, “and though I may not be able to remember material things such as tickets, gloves, and so on, I can remember things like *Ivanhoe*, and the last time we had an examination on it, I got a ninety-eight.”

Jack did fairly well in his other subjects. The one exception was Latin. In Latin he didn’t do well at all.

When the football season ended, Jack went out for the swimming team. Every afternoon he thrashed up and down the fifty-foot pool, improving his stroke and speed.

One winter day the swimming coach watched Jack Kennedy as his lean body sliced through the pool’s waters.

“I want to time you, Jack,” he said. “I want you to try a fifty-yard sprint. I think you can make the team for that distance.”

A very pleased and eager Jack stood on the pool edge next to the coach, who held a stop watch in his hand.

“Hold it, Jack,” said the coach. “I want an exact timing. I’ll give you the starting signal.”

The coach held his right hand in the air. He brought it down swiftly and shouted “Go!” at the same time.

Jack hit the surface of the water in a flat racing dive. His arms whacked the water as he plowed on. At the far end of the pool, he turned swiftly and gave a powerful thrust with his legs against the pool wall. Back up-pool he swam, arms flashing in and out of the water. Another racing turn and Jack was on the last lap of the fifty yards—fifty feet to go.

The coach was waiting. Jack’s hand touched the end of the pool.

He bobbed his head, shook the water out of his hair, and looked up. The coach had a big smile on his face.

"Thirty seconds flat, Jack. Excellent time! Excellent!"

"Do I make the team?" Jack wanted to know.

"You bet you do. You will swim the fifty for us on the first team!"

The snowy winter months came to an end at long last. Now Canterbury's playing fields rang with the sharp crack of bat meeting baseball, the dull thud of ball socking into a catcher's mitt.

Jack was out on the baseball diamond with the others. He was fast and flashy, but still the smallest boy trying out for the team. He was very happy when he went to bed one spring night after baseball practice. He had made two hits and a fine, running catch of a long fly ball.

Perhaps he dreamed of winning the BIG game for Canterbury. At any rate he woke suddenly and sat up.

"Ooooh! What a pain," he mumbled.

He bent forward. He pressed a hand down low, to the right of his stomach. Another fiery pain brought tears to his eyes. He moaned softly, trying not to wake his roommate. The pain grew worse and his moans grew louder.

Jack's roommate woke up. "What's the matter with you!"

"Bad pain. Terrible." The words jerked out between moans.

"Want me to go for the doctor?"

"Please. Hurry. Pain's killing me." Jack was rocking back and forth in his bed, trying to make the pain go away.

The doctor came. He examined Jack carefully.

"Does it hurt right here?" The doctor pressed his hand against Jack's abdomen.

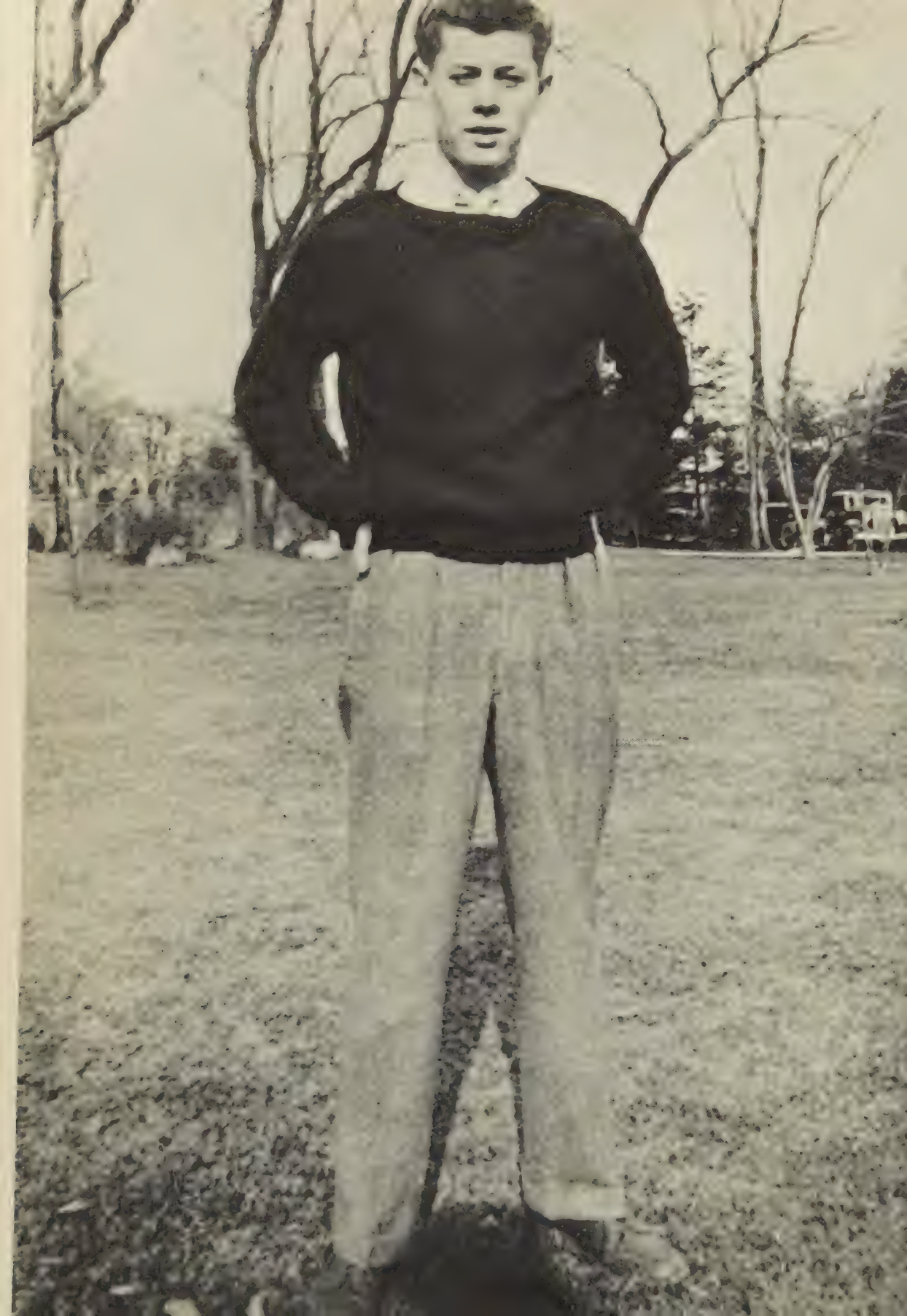
"Ye-yess!" Jack cried out.

"You've got appendicitis, Kennedy. You'll have to be operated on. That appendix will have to come out."

The doctor called Jack's parents in Bronxville. One hour later Jack was in an ambulance, speeding toward home and the hospital.

There his appendix was removed. It was June before he recovered from the operation and was able to move about. The big games were over and Canterbury School was almost ready to close. It was too late for Jack to return. So he went with his family to their summer home at Hyannis Port on Cape Cod. There, Jack was soon able to get back into full action. A long, fun-filled summer of swimming, sailing, tennis, and golf stretched ahead.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Pie in Jack's Eye*

All the Kennedys were at Hyannis Port. Joe, Jr., had come home from boarding school at the end of June. Joseph, Sr., came from New York for weekends.

Hardly a day passed that the Kennedys did not go swimming or sailing in the sparkling waters of Nantucket Sound. The family boat was called *The Tenofus*, for the ten members of the family. When Edward was born, a few years later, another boat was added to the Kennedy fleet, and was named *One More*.

Except for weekends, Mr. Kennedy was away much of the time. Then young Joe took over the duties of the man of the family. When Joe, Jr., was away for a few days, visiting a friend, Jack took over as man of the family.

But usually Joe was the boss. Everybody knew it, and no one objected too strongly, yet sometimes Jack thought his big brother went too far. When they were sailing, Joe always insisted on being the captain. He did not hesitate to shove Jack over the side if Jack didn't answer a command quickly or refused to obey an order.

Jack objected to having Joe be the captain all the time. He believed he was just as good a sailor as Joe was. And there was very little difference in their ability to handle a sailing craft. Both were skilled sailors.

One afternoon Joe and Jack were in a sailing race with another small boat. There was a good wind, and Joe was trying to get every bit of speed he could out of *The Tenofus*.

"Coming about!" Joe shouted. He threw the tiller over, and brought the boat into the wind.

"In boat! In boat, Jack!" Joe barked out the command. Jack was in the boat, all right, but Joe's order meant for Jack to crouch low in the boat—right down on the floorboards.

Jack was just a bit slow in carrying out the order. Joe took one step forward, holding the tiller in his left hand. With a sweeping movement of his right arm, he caught Jack unexpectedly and swept him overboard.

"I'll get you for that," Jack shouted as he treaded water. Joe saluted

an Kennedy was still at Dexter in this  
ture but growing up fast.



and grinned. Jack returned the grin and salute, then started swimming for shore. The beach was only a short distance away. As Jack swam shoreward with easy, powerful strokes, a plot started shaping in his mind. He would get his revenge on big brother Joe. He would put his plot into action that very night, at the supper table.

Jack knew there would be chocolate pie with whipped cream for dessert at supper. He had seen the cook making it that morning. Chocolate pie with whipped cream was Joe's favorite dessert.

That night at supper Jack ate more rapidly than usual.

"May I have my pie now, Mother?" he asked.

"My! You certainly ate in a hurry, Jack. It's not good for you to eat so fast. But I suppose you can have your pie." Mrs. Kennedy rang for the maid.

"You might as well serve the pie all around," Mrs. Kennedy said. "We'll all be ready for it in a few moments."

A thick piece of chocolate pie, covered with whipped cream, was placed in front of each child. Jack ate his quickly. Joe was still finishing the rest of his dinner. But his eyes looked hungrily at his piece of pie.

"May I be excused now, Mother?" Jack asked.

"You may, son."

Jack got up. As he walked behind his brother's chair, he shot an arm out with lightning speed and snatched Joe's piece of pie. Then he ran out of the dining room, cramming it into his mouth.

With a shout, Joe was after him.

Jack ran across the broad lawn toward the Sound. Joe wasn't far behind him, and gaining. Running at full speed and eating chocolate pie at the same time was a problem—a messy one. More pie was on the outside of Jack's face than in his mouth. Chocolate filling was smeared all over his face, on his nose and in his eyes.

Five other Kennedy children came racing out of the house. Kick was in the lead. Eunice was right behind her, followed by Pat. Rosemary came next. Bringing up the rear was Bobby, running as fast as his small legs could carry him. They weren't going to miss any of this!

Jack darted out on the stone breakwater that jutted a hundred feet into the sound. He leaped from rock to rock. Joe was right behind him. The only pie left was smeared on Jack's face.

At the end of the breakwater, Jack stopped. The waters of the sound lapped gently at the rocks. Jack looked back. Joe was only a few feet away. But he had stopped too.

"Why did you snatch my pie?" Joe demanded.

"Why did you push me overboard?" Jack answered.

Joe took another step nearer. Jack looked down at the water, eight feet below. "I'll have to dive," he thought. "And swim to shore. But Joe will be waiting for me there."

Suddenly Joe started laughing.

"You ought to see your face!"

Jack's hand touched one cheek and came away smeared with a glob of chocolate. He started laughing, too.

"Come on, Jack. I guess we're even," Joe said. "Anyway, I don't want you to swim. You'd wash off all that chocolate, and the other kids have got to see your face!"

The two boys walked back over the breakwater to shore. The other children were waiting. Soon, seven Kennedy brothers and sisters were howling with laughter as they headed back to the house. Their mother was waiting. She, too, joined in the laughter.

"All right, Jack. Fun's fun," she said. "Now go wash your face!"

The summers at Hyannis Port on Cape Cod were always happy ones for Jack and his brothers and sisters. There was something going on from the moment the children got up until the moment they went to bed, tired after a hard day of sports. Almost every afternoon they played touch football. Three of the girls, Kick Eunice, and Pat, were excellent players. They were fast and could catch a pass as skillfully as their brothers. Even Bobby took part in the games. He was only five, but he insisted on playing.

Jack headed one team, usually with Kick and Eunice for his teammates. Joe had Pat and Bobby for the members of his team. This worked out well. Bobby's lack of size was offset by Joe, the biggest of the players. The teams were three against three. One day Jack's team would win. The next day, Joe, Pat, and Bobby would be the victors. But as soon as a game was over, no matter what the outcome, it was forgotten by both brothers immediately. They were strong rivals, but they were also good friends. And when they teamed together against someone outside the family, they were almost unbeatable.

They proved this week after week in the sailing races on Nantucket Sound. In these races they took turns at being captain. One week Joe was captain and Jack the crew. The next week Jack was at the tiller of his boat, the *Victura*, barking out the commands. Joe, as crew, handled the sails.



The boys were fine sailors, in fair weather or foul. But sometimes even their "do or die" spirit couldn't overcome the weather. One day Jack was bitterly disappointed. A race between two yacht clubs was planned, and he was all ready to take part. At the last minute the men on the race committee called the contest off because the water was too rough.

"Let's show them the water isn't too rough," Jack said to Joe. Joe needed no urging.

Jack headed the *Victura* into the wind and waves. The race committee and other spectators watched from the shore. The small boat plunged up and down, its sharp bow cutting into the choppy waves. Wind-blown spray dashed over the boat, drenching the two boys. The seas were rising, and the howling wind bellied out the *Victura's* main sail. A huge wave shot the boat upward. When she rose again, neither boy could be seen from the shore. Both had been tossed overboard.

Strong swimmers, the boys splashed their way through the angry waves back to their boat. They climbed aboard. Jack brought the boat about and headed shoreward. He eased her up on the sandy beach. Joe dropped the sail.

"You see, we made it all right," Jack said, hoping the contest might still be held.

The officials only shook their heads. "No race today," they said. "You've just seen why!"

The summer ended on a note of triumph for Jack. All the Kennedys were gathered at the swimming pool on the grounds of their Hyannis Port estate. Sun-tanned bodies popped in and out of the pool. Mr. Kennedy had just finished giving Jean a swimming lesson.

"How about one last race, Joe?" Jack challenged.

In moments, the Kennedys were lining the sides of the pool. Jack had his cheering section. Joe had his.

"Four laps, boys," Mr. Kennedy said. "Up the pool and back twice."

The brothers were head and head at the end of the first lap. Jack took a small lead during the second. Then Joe caught up and forged ahead midway through the third lap. Both made racing turns for the final lap. Jack had been holding back, saving his strength. Now his arms stroked faster. He began pulling away. He left Joe in his wake as he steamed forward to win by fifteen feet. When he climbed out of the pool, he was smiling happily. In swimming, at least, he was better than big brother Joe.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Prep School Days*

"Hi, Jack. Don't tell me you're studying!"

Jack looked up from the book he was reading as his brother Joe came into the room.

"Sure, I'm studying," Jack said. "What do you think?"

"I'd hate to say what I think about you and your studying. You wouldn't like it," Joe replied.

The boys were in Jack's room at the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut. Jack had not returned to Canterbury. His family had sent him to Choate, instead, where Joe now had been for two years.

"Seriously, Jack," Joe went on, "how do you like it here? You've been here three months now."

"I like it fine. They mark hard, though. But I'm getting by — I think."

"Plug away at it, little brother. You'll be sorry if you don't," big brother Joe advised seriously.

"I will," Jack said. "Don't worry. I want to stay at Choate."

"And if you can ever put some weight on, you'll make the first football squad," Joe told him. "I've watched some of the games you played with the Blues. You'd be good if you just weren't so *skinny*."

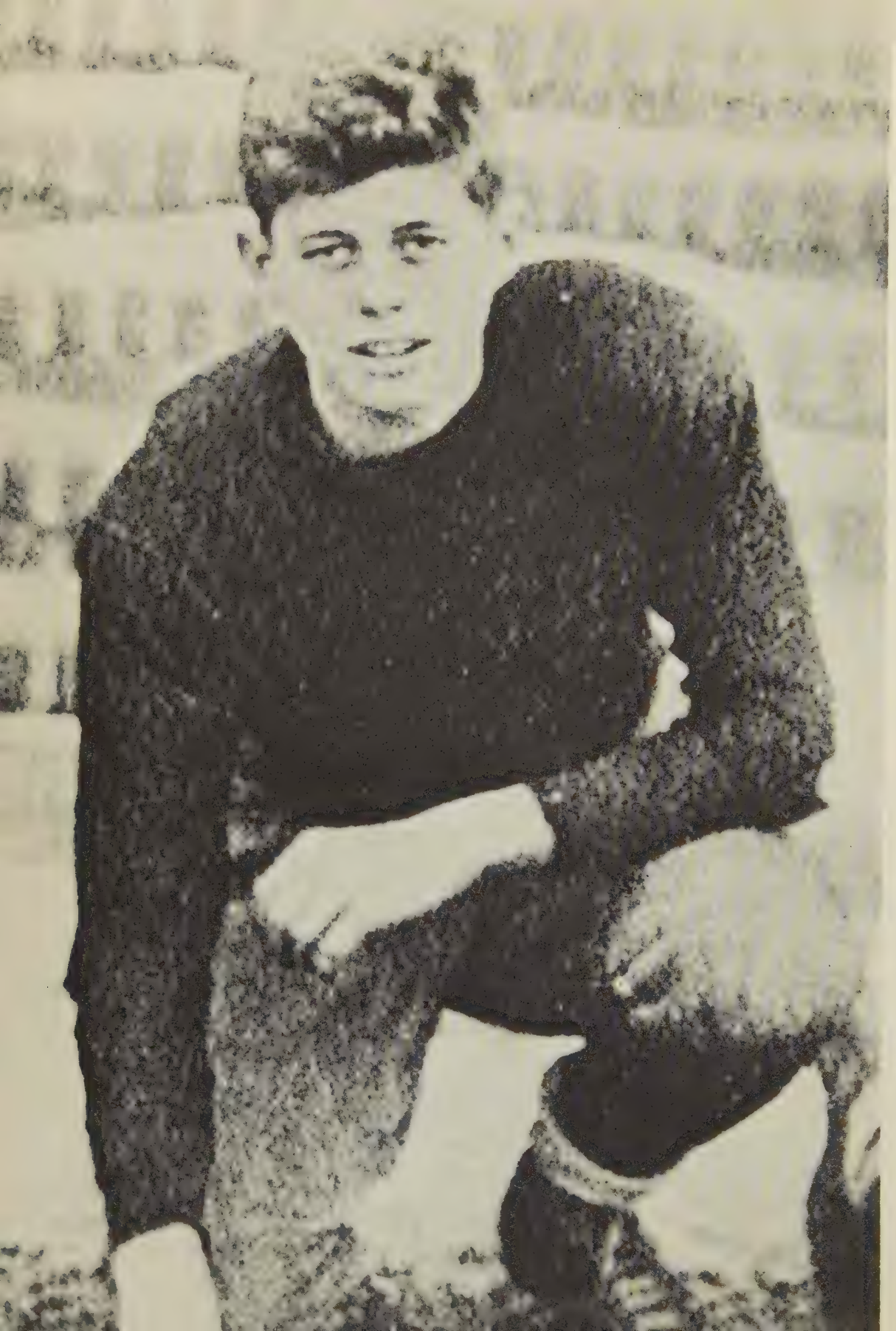
The Blues were a club team made up of boys who weren't big enough to go out for the first team. The Blues played the Golds — Choate School's colors.

"Well, I don't want to hold you up from your studying," Joe said. "If I can help you, just let me know. Be seeing you."

There was admiration in Jack's eyes as he watched his brother leave the room. He so much wanted to do everything as well as Joe did. Joe was a star on the football and baseball squads. Joe did very well in all his studies. Jack turned back to his book. He was determined to match his brother, whom he liked and respected so much. He meant to study hard. But he had read only one page when his best friend Les Billings burst into the room.

"Hey—what do you know!" Les said. "Rip Horton got a package of





food from home today. He was hiding it. Homemade chocolate cake! And a pie! Sort of squashy. But mm-m—dee-lish-us!”

“And how do you know it’s so dee-lish-us!” Jack mimicked.

“Just watch the old master, Les Billings.” Billings reached a hand under his shirt, which bulged strangely, and pulled out a badly crushed box. “Here.” Les opened the box. “Half a chocolate cake. Two thirds of a beat-up apple pie.”

“You swiped the box?” Jack asked.

“Just borrowed it,” Les replied.

“Rip’s going to find out. And when he does. . . .” Jack grinned.

“But in the meantime, Jack, my friend, it would be a shame to let this good cake and pie go to waste.”

“I agree,” said Jack. The boys began eating the cake and pie.

Their mouths were full when Rip came charging into Jack’s room.

“Les Billings,” Rip stormed. “You stole my cake!”

“Me?” Billings asked, trying to look innocent.

“Yes. You. Part of that cake’s on your thieving face right now.”

Billings tried quickly to wipe cake crumbs from his face.

“Are you in on this, too, Jack?” Rip asked.

“Who, me? I was just helping Les eat this cake, which he said you had so gladly given him,” Jack said.

“I don’t believe a word either of you have said. But . . . is there anything left?”

Jack, Les, and Rip were close friends. The argument went on only a few minutes longer. Then all three finished the cake and pie.

While they were talking, the lights in Jack’s room blinked on and off. That meant there were only fifteen minutes before lights out.

“Oh! Oh!” Les said. “It’s getting late. I’ve got to run.”

“Me, too,” Rip chimed in. The two boys left quickly.

Jack turned back to his book. He realized he hadn’t done much studying that night. “Tomorrow,” he told himself. “Tomorrow I’ll really start studying.” He undressed and tumbled into bed.

The next morning, Jack returned to his room after breakfast. There were fifteen minutes left before the bell would ring calling all boys to their classes. He intended to put in a fast fifteen minutes of studying. He never opened his books.

*Jack Kennedy, at sixteen, plays football for Choate School.  
One teammate described him as “a tiger on defense.”*

"Is this a boy's room or a pigpen?" came a thundering voice from the doorway.

Jack jumped. There stood the housemaster, Mr. Linebach. Jack groaned. This was another one of those unexpected room inspections. The rules were that every boy's room had to be neat and in perfect order before the boy went to class.

"Just take a look at this room, Kennedy," the housemaster said.

Jack did. His books were scattered on his unmade bed. His jacket was hung on a chair. Unshined shoes made tiny islands everywhere in the room. Neckties hung from the reading lamp. Soiled clothes filled every corner. A football was in the middle of the floor.

The housemaster strode into the room. He kicked the football out of the way. He opened the door of Jack's closet.

"Not bad. Not bad at all," he roared at Jack. "One might almost say it's neat. And why? Because there's nothing in it! You hang everything on the floors, the wall, the lamp, the bed!"

The housemaster went to work. He ripped the covers off Jack's bed. He tossed them in the middle of the room. He dumped shoes, books, neckties, coats, and dirty clothes in one heaping pile.

"All right, Kennedy. Now you *unmake* this pile. I want everything in your room put in its right place. And right now!"

"But sir," Jack protested. "If I do it now, I'll be late for class."

"That, Mister Kennedy, is your problem. I WILL BE BACK!"

Mr. Linebach walked out, leaving an unhappy boy behind him. Jack shrugged his shoulders. There was only one thing to do. Obey Mr. Linebach and be late to class. And that meant he would be confined to his room for at least three days. There would be no swimming. No visits to other rooms. No friends allowed to visit him.

"It's my own fault," Jack thought as he went to work. "There's one good thing about this, though. I'll surely get some studying done in the next three days."

And he did. Housemaster Linebach was strict, but he was fair. The boys liked him. Every spring he took the boys in his house on a picnic.

"Are you all ready for pie?" he asked as the boys ate their picnic lunch one day.

Twenty pie-hungry boys gave a loud "Yes!"

"We'll have a contest," said Mr. Linebach. "The winner will be the boy who gobbles up his pie first."

"Great!" the boys shouted.



"But there's a catch in this contest." The housemaster grinned. "You have to eat your pie with NO HANDS!"

The boys groaned.

"All ready? Go!"

Twenty faces plunged into twenty pieces of pie. Jack's pie-covered face came up first.

"The winner!" Mr. Lineback held Jack's hand in the air.

Jack's four years at Choate were filled with fun and work. In his third year he studied harder and got better grades. In his fourth year a visit from his father spurred him on.

"Jack, if you do well this year," his father said, "I'll give you something you've been wanting for a long time. It will be your graduation present."

"What's that, Dad?" asked Jack.

"A trip to England next summer," said his father.

"Great, Dad. I'll work harder than ever," Jack promised. "You'll be getting letters from me from England next summer."

Graduation day arrived. Proud parents crowded the lawn where the outdoor graduation exercises were being held. As proud as any were Jack's parents and his brothers and sisters. They applauded as Jack, now a lean, tall handsome eighteen-year-old, received his diploma. He hurried over to them when the exercises were over.

"This is for you—the two best parents in the world," Jack said, handing them his diploma. He blinked his eyes to hold back the tears.

"You earned it, son," Mr. Kennedy replied. "And you've also won your trip to England."

"I have? Great! Wait till I tell Les about that. He's coming with me."

He looked around for Les, and the Kennedy family started walking away.

"I've got something else to tell you," Jack said.

"What's that, Jack?" his mother asked, turning back.

"I was voted the boy in my class most likely to succeed."

"You were! Wonderful, son. Your classmates couldn't have picked a better boy for the honor." Jack's father beamed. Jack's mother threw her arms around her tall son and reached up to kiss him on the forehead.

Jack's classmates were right when they voted Jack "most likely to succeed." Of all the young men who have been selected for this honor, few, if any, ever lived up to it as did John Fitzgerald Kennedy.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Young Man at Harvard*

Jack Kennedy, always a young-man-in-a-hurry, was trotting across the Harvard campus. He had been admitted to Harvard that fall.

"Hold up, Jack! Wait for me."

It was his brother Joe calling. Joe joined Jack and the brothers fell in step, heading for the Harvard Stadium.

"I hear you're doing all right on the Freshman team," Joe commented.

"Well, I've played in all the games so far," Jack said. "We're having a good season. And next year, I'm going to make the varsity. I'll be playing along with you."

Joe Kennedy was a star on the varsity—Harvard's best football team, the one that played in the big games between colleges.

"That's the spirit, Jack," Joe said. "Put on a little more weight and I know you'll make the varsity."

In his Sophomore year, Jack tried out for the Harvard varsity. In practice, his fiery spirit drove him to put everything he had in every play. Jack had a lot of help from his roommate, Torby Macdonald. Torby was an outstanding triple-threat halfback. He could run, pass and punt. He won All-American honors as a Harvard player.

Often after regular practice was over, Torby and Jack continued passing practice until nightfall. Time after time, Torby tossed long, spiralling passes downfield to Jack. Jack would leap high in the air and pull the passes in.

"You're the best pass receiver on the squad," the coach told Jack one day. "But you're too light. If I let you play on the varsity, you'll be smeared by heavier players. Sorry."

Jack was sorry too, and greatly disappointed. He wouldn't give up, though. He loved football too much to quit playing the game. He went out for the junior varsity team, which was made up of lighter men, and made it.



The football season was nearing its end. There was heavy practice going on, three days before a game on the coming Saturday. Jack was in the thick of every play, following signals perfectly, working hard to be the best left end.

The quarterback called Jack's signal for a long pass downfield. The linesmen dug into their positions. The ball was snapped from the center. Jack sped downfield. The pass was perfectly thrown. Jack took it and headed for the goal. As he did so, he was tackled from behind. He hit the turf with a body-shaking crash. Two other players, unable to check their speed, piled on top of Jack and his tackler. Soon, there was a mound of scrambling, struggling players. Jack was on the bottom, the football clutched to his chest.

"All right! Unpile!" The coach pulled at grass-stained, torn football jerseys. One by one the players got up. Jack was last. He started to get up. Pain flashed across his face.

"What's the matter, Kennedy?" the coach asked.

"Nothing, coach. Little strain in my back is all. I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"That will be all for you today," the coach ordered. "Go take your shower and have that back examined."

Jack trudged slowly, unhappily toward the dressing room. His back was really hurting. The team's doctor examined it and sent Jack right to the Harvard infirmary. There a longer and more careful examination took place.

"I'll want some X-rays," the doctor said, "but I am afraid, young man, that your football playing days are over."

"What!" exclaimed Jack. "They can't be, Doctor. We've got a big game on Saturday. And the Yale game is only two weeks off."

The doctor shook his head. "Sorry."

The X-rays and another examination showed that Jack had received a serious back injury. He would never be able to play football again. This was a terrible blow to him. Not only did he love football, but he wanted desperately to play for Harvard.

For a few weeks Jack went around in very low spirits. Then he put aside his disappointment. Nothing could keep Jack Kennedy down for long. Football was not the only sport, he told himself.

"I'll go out for the swimming squad," he decided.

Jack threw himself into this sport with the same drive and spirit he

gave everything he attempted. It seemed certain that he would make the first team.

The time drew near for the final tryouts for a big swimming meet with Yale. Early one morning Torby shook Jack by the shoulder.

"Okay, Jack," he said. "Time to get up. You've got to stow away plenty of groceries if you're going to win the backstroke against Yale."

"I think I'll skip breakfast this morning," Jack turned on his back.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't feel so hot."

Torby placed a hand on Jack's forehead. He frowned.

"You've got that just backward. You feel too hot!"

An hour later Jack was in the Harvard infirmary. He had the flu.

"There's a lot of flu going around these days," the examining doctor told him. "But you'll be all right in a week or so."

The doctor's words sent Jack's spirits tumbling. Tryouts for the team were exactly a week away. If he wasn't able to swim in the tryouts, he'd never be able to swim against Yale. Jack felt that he just couldn't miss out again in his efforts to make a Harvard varsity team.

When Torby came to visit him in the infirmary that afternoon, Jack had his plan all worked out.

"You know what this infirmary food is like—ugh!" Jack said to his friend. "Soup! Lots of liquids. Nothing substantial."

"I know," Torby said with a pained look on his face. "I've been in here, too."

"I've got to keep up my strength for the tryouts."

"You won't be out of here by then," Torby replied.

"Oh yes, I will," Jack said. "Look, here's what I want you to do."

Torby kept shaking his head as Jack poured out his instructions.

"Well," he said when his friend had finished, "I'll have to say one thing about you, Jack, you've got plenty of nerve."

During the next three days nurses in the infirmary wondered why their new patient never seemed to eat anything.

"He drinks his milk," one nurse said to another. "But that's just about all. You'd think he'd starve."

There was a good reason why Jack wasn't hungry. How could he be after devouring a big steak, with plenty of heavily buttered mashed potatoes, and drinking a huge milk shake just before the hospital food was brought in?



Loyal Torby was following his instructions and bringing Jack this meal twice a day.

"Here comes my muscle food," Jack greeted Torby on the afternoon of the third day.

"And if you think it's easy smuggling in a plate of hot food, you're crazy," Torby replied, placing a hot platter on Jack's bed tray.

"I'm feeling fine." Jack grinned at Torby. "Keeping my strength up. Look, we've got four days before the tryouts, haven't we?"

Torby nodded his head.

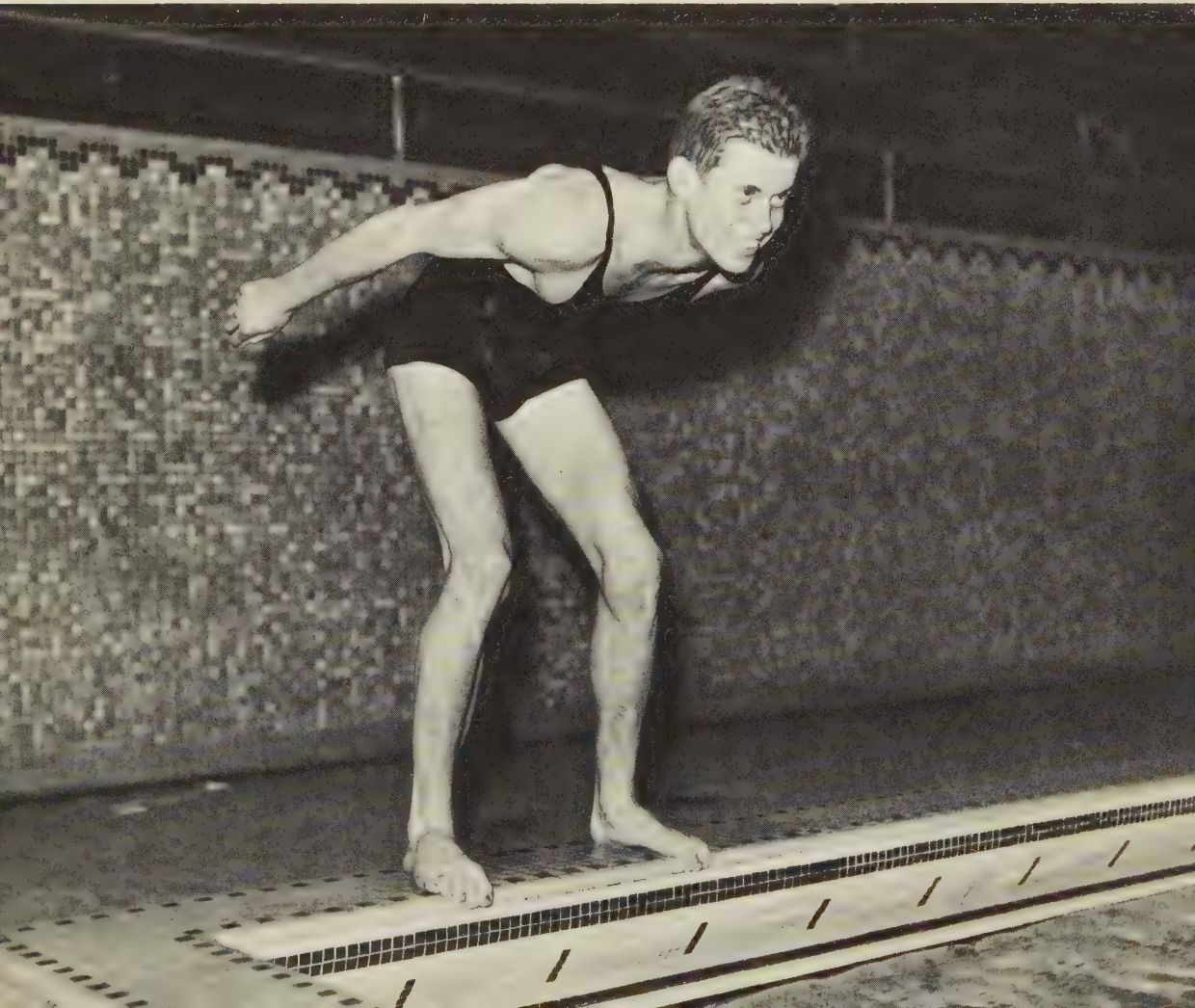
"Okay." Jack went on. "I'm resuming practice tomorrow."

"Good. Did Doc say you could?"

"Well, not exactly," Jack said. "But good old Doc isn't going to know anything about it."

"What do you mean?" Torby was becoming alarmed. Jack must have cooked up another plot.

*The start of the backstroke event. Kennedy is on the Harvard varsity swimming team.*





Jack lowered his voice. "You know there's never anyone in the pool around two o'clock," he said. "Bring me some clothes tomorrow morning. I can easily slip out of here. Everyone's asleep around here at that time."

"Absolutely not!" Torby insisted. "You've got the flu, boy. If you went swimming now, you could get pneumonia."

"Torby. You're my pal." Jack's gray-blue eyes pierced his friend's as if to hypnotize him. "Clothes. Tomorrow morning."

Torby shrugged his shoulders. He knew he would give in. When Jack's mind was made up, there was no stopping him.

For the next four days, Jack climbed out of his sick bed, slipped out of the infirmary and sneaked into the pool. A worried Torby watched him as he thrashed up and down the pool, doing six laps each day.

On the day of the tryouts, Jack's doctor took his temperature, and gave him a general checkup.

"You'll be out of here in another few days, young man," was the doctor's pronouncement.

"Yes, sir," Jack answered solemnly.

Jack was out of the infirmary that *afternoon!* It was four o'clock. The Harvard swimming squad lined the pool.

"Tryouts for the backstroke! Take your positions," Coach Harold Uhlen called out.

Jack lined up with three other swimmers. The shot from the starting gun echoed against the four walls enclosing the pool. Four young men hit the water. Jack took a quick lead. He held it for the first lap. He had a beautiful backstroke, with a strong leg kick. Halfway through the second lap, a rival drew even with him. They swam head to head through the third lap. Then, on the fourth and final lap, Jack just gave out. The daily steaks and potatoes hadn't been enough to overcome the weakness caused by his illness. His rival pulled ahead, beating Jack out for the backstroke position by two lengths.

The winner was Richard Tregaskis. Years later, Tregaskis was to win fame as a newspaper reporter writing about the war with Japan in the South Pacific. Jack was to win fame there as captain of a PT boat.

Once again, illness had stopped Jack from reaching a goal he had his heart set on.

"He was a fine kid," Coach Uhlen said about Jack. "Frail, and not too strong, but always giving it everything he had."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *A Taste of War*

Tugboat whistles tooted. From atop the ocean liner's masts bright colored flags and pennants snapped in the whipping breeze. The huge ship moved slowly away from its dock in New York's bustling harbor. Lining the dock-side rail of the upper deck were Mrs. Kennedy, five Kennedy girls, and two Kennedy boys. They waved furiously at the two young men on the dock below.

Jack and Joe Kennedy waved back. Their shouts of farewell were drowned out by the deep growl of the ship's throaty whistle and the shrill pipings of the tugs' whistles. The two youths stayed on the dock until the ship was in midstream of the Hudson River.

"Well, back to Cambridge," Jack said to his brother.

"Back to Harvard and my law books," Joe answered.

Mrs. Kennedy and seven of her children were sailing for London. Joseph Kennedy, Sr. was now the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James in England. Jack was going back to Harvard for his third year. Joe had graduated and was entering Harvard Law School.

"I wish Dad were coming back here instead of Mother and the kids going over there," Jack said as the brothers left the dock.

"Oh, they'll be all right," Joe replied. "I'll match you to see who pays the cab fare to Grand Central."

"Okay," Jack said. The boys flipped coins.

"I win," Joe said, a big grin on his face.

"You do? All right." Jack's mind wasn't on what he was doing. "Hold it! You said you were matching me. Your tails doesn't match my heads."

"Just thought I'd see if I could catch you napping."

He almost had. Jack's thoughts were still with his family. These were troubled times in Europe and America. It was 1938. Germany's dictator, Adolf Hitler, was threatening the peace of Europe. Many people were afraid there would soon be a war.

In the United States, thousands of workers were out of jobs. Other thousands were striking. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was trying hard to improve conditions in the country. But many families were without enough food or clothing.

Jack Kennedy spent hours listening to radio reports and reading the newspapers. He was worried about his own country, but he was more worried about what was happening in Europe. He wanted to see with his own eyes what was going on there. So he arranged to leave Harvard for one semester. In February, 1939, he sailed for England to join his family.

His father's office was in the United States Embassy in London. There Ambassador Kennedy and Jack talked about the events which were stirring up all of Europe.

"Do you think there will be war, Dad?" Jack asked.

"Things look bad, son," Ambassador Kennedy replied. "And they're getting worse."

"If there is a war, will the United States be pulled into it?"

"I hope not," said the Ambassador. "We should stay out, Jack. That's what I am working for. Maybe you can help me."

"How, Dad?" Jack asked eagerly.



*Jack's mother, three Kennedy sisters, and two Kennedy brothers are about to sail for London on the S. S. Washington. But Jack and Joe had to go back to Harvard.*



"I know you want to go all over Europe in the next few months." Ambassador Kennedy leaned back in his chair.

"That's right, Dad. I'm leaving next week for France."

"Here's what I'd like you to do. I want you to send me reports on what you see in every country you visit."

"Great. I can do that," Jack said.

"Find out how people are feeling and what they are thinking. That would be a big help to me."

Jack spent six exciting months in Europe. Everywhere he went he asked questions. "What will Hitler do next?" "Do you think there will be war?" He asked these and other questions of soldiers, lawyers, and railroad conductors. He stopped people on the street and asked them what they thought. Each week he wrote a long letter to his father, reporting on what he had seen and heard.

He visited Poland and wrote to his father that he believed the Poles would fight if Hitler sent tanks and planes against them. He traveled to Russia and went to the Kremlin, the headquarters of the Russian government. In a Russian airplane with no seats and a broken window, he flew south and then sailed to Turkey. From there he went to Palestine and then through the Balkan countries to Berlin. There he saw Hitler's Storm Troopers marching through the city.

In August Jack went to Val-sur-Mer near Cannes, France, where the Kennedys had bought a beautiful villa. Ambassador Kennedy was there on a short vacation. He and Jack had long talks about what Jack had seen and heard.

Mrs. Kennedy and all the children were at Val-sur-Mer, too. They swam and sailed in the warm, blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. It was the last time the whole family was ever to be together.

It was a bright, sunny morning near the end of August. The younger Kennedy children were splashing in the sparkling water along the beach. Jack and his mother were stretched out in deck chairs, chatting about his recent trip and his return to Harvard. Jack looked up and saw his father walking rapidly toward them across the sand.

"Round up the children, Jack," Ambassador Kennedy said. "Rose, we've got to get right back to London," he told his wife.

The Ambassador's tone of voice was serious. He had a worried look on his face.

"Must we go today?" Mrs. Kennedy asked.

"This afternoon," Mr. Kennedy answered grimly.

Jack didn't wait to question his father. He knew that something of great importance must have come up. His father was a man of action. He never wasted words when something had to be done.

Jack gathered his younger brothers and sisters together. That afternoon the family was on its way back to London.

Ambassador Kennedy had received a secret message from Washington that morning. It told him that war might break out within a few days.

On September 1, 1939, a few days after the Kennedys returned to London, German tanks rolled into Poland, and German planes roared overhead. Two days later England and France, which were friendly to Poland, declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

Jack was at his father's side almost every moment during those terrible times. Ambassador Kennedy worked late into the night at the American Embassy in London. Jack stayed with him, listening to the latest radio reports, and repeating them to his busy father.

On September 4, lights burned until midnight in the United States Embassy. Then Jack and his father, dead tired, left for the Kennedys' country estate just outside London.

As worried as he was, Jack fell asleep almost immediately when he crawled into bed. It seemed only minutes later when he felt a hand shake his shoulder.

"Wake up, Jack. I've got a job for you."

Jack rubbed his sleepy eyes and looked up at his father.

"Hurry up and get dressed," the Ambassador ordered. "The United States is already involved in this horrible war."

"How, Dad? What happened?" Jack was alert now, already pulling on his clothes.

"A German submarine has torpedoed the *Athenia*. She's a British ship and was bound for Canada with over a thousand men, women, and children aboard. Three hundred of them are Americans."

"Are there any survivors, Dad?" Jack asked.

"Yes. Some of them are being taken to Glasgow in Scotland. I want you to go right up to Glasgow and see how we can help them."

Jack was soon on his way. When he reached the dock in Glasgow where the survivors were landing, he found everything in confusion. Some survivors had been taken to Belfast in Ireland and some to Halifax

in England. Families had been separated, and tearful mothers were searching frantically for their children.

Jack went to work at once. He telephoned Belfast and Halifax to ask about missing children. He helped find missing fathers and mothers. At the end of two days, most of the families were together again. But there was much sadness. Sixteen children, sixty-nine women, and twenty-seven men had been drowned. Jack went back to London with a heavy heart.

"You did a fine job, son," Ambassador Kennedy greeted his son. "Tell me, is it true that it was a German submarine that sank the *Athenia*? The Germans in Berlin are saying it wasn't."

"There's no question about it, Dad. I talked to hundreds of survivors, and to officers and members of the crew. Every one of them said it was a U-boat."

This was important information for Jack Kennedy to bring to his father. The Germans were claiming that the British themselves had deliberately sunk one of their own ships. They claimed that the British had done this so they could blame it on the Germans, and get American sympathy.

Three weeks later, Jack sailed for America for his last year at Harvard. He had had his first taste of war. He was a much more serious young man going back to college.

*Ambassador Kennedy's son works hard in his father's office at the American Embassy in London during the early days of World War II.*





## CHAPTER NINE

### *Welcome Aboard*

When Jack returned to Harvard, he seemed much older to his friends. He didn't clown around with the others so much. He studied harder.

"I never thought you'd turn into a bookworm," Torby Macdonald, Jack's roommate, said to him one afternoon, when Jack was studying.

"I've got a paper to write," Jack replied.

"I know it," said Torby. "So have I. But they're not due for ten days. How about tossing the old football around?"

"Well . . ." Jack hesitated.

"Remember, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," Torby remarked.

Jack made a face at the old saying.

"Okay," he agreed. "Not for long, though."

The two friends walked over to the broad, grass-covered bank of the Charles River and tossed the football around for half an hour.

"That's all, Torby," Jack decided. "It was a nice workout. But I've got to get back to my books."

All through Jack's Senior year he worked as hard at his studies as he had ever worked at sports. His marks were good and he graduated in the spring of 1940 with honors. He also received high honors for the final examination paper he wrote.

Ambassador Kennedy was still in London. He was not able to attend his son's graduation. But Jack's mother was there. So were his sisters, Joe, Jr. and young Bobby, who was now fourteen. They looked on proudly as Jack received his diploma. When graduation exercises were over, they left for Hyannis Port.

Jack went back to his rooms. He tossed his diploma on the couch and took off the cap and gown he had worn for graduation. He looked around the rooms where he had spent so many happy hours. He walked over to the window and looked out over the Charles River.

There was a knock on his door. Jack opened it.

"John Fitzgerald Kennedy?" a telegraph messenger asked.

"That's right," Jack replied.

"Sign here."

Jack signed his name and took the message. It was from his father.

"TWO THINGS I ALWAYS KNEW ABOUT YOU," Jack's proud father had cabled. "ONE, THAT YOU ARE SMART. TWO, THAT YOU ARE A SWELL GUY. LOVE, DAD."

Jack's college days were over.



## JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

Born May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts. Prepared at The Choate School. Home Address: 294 Pondfield Road, Bronxville, New York. Winthrop House. *Crimson* (2-4); Chairman Smoker Committee (1); St. Paul's Catholic Club (1-4). Football (1), Junior Varsity (2). Swimming (1), Squad (2). Golf (1). House Hockey (3, 4); House Swimming (2); House Softball (4). Hasty Pudding-Institute of 1770 Spee Club. Permanent Class Committee. Field of Concentration: Government. Intended Vocation: Law.

The days that followed were restless ones for Jack Kennedy. Summer at Hyannis Port was filled with the usual games, and with swimming and sailing. But much of the fun of those games and sports was gone for Jack. They did not seem important to him when he thought of the flames of war that were sweeping over all Europe.

### HITLER MARCHES INTO PARIS

Jack's heart sank as he read that headline in his newspaper. It was the middle of June, 1940, only a few days after his graduation. Germany had captured Poland two weeks after he had helped the survivors of the *Athenia*.

Then Hitler's Nazi Army had swept through Holland and Belgium. Now France had fallen to Germany and German planes were dropping bombs on London, on the other side of the English Channel.

As the summer passed, the fighting spread. Jack was restless and nervous. He gave up his plans for going to Yale Law School in the fall. Nothing seemed so important to him as the war in Europe.

"We're going to be drawn into this war," he told himself. "We can't keep out. And I want to fight for my country."

Brother Joe had already enlisted in the Navy.

Jack decided to enlist in the Army.

He went through all the physical tests which every volunteer must take. When they were over, he stood before the Army medical officer who was reading the reports.

"Well, sir, when do I go off to camp?" he asked hopefully.

The officer looked up from his papers.

"You don't," he replied.

Jack was stunned. "What do you mean?" he asked. "I'm okay!"

The medical officer shook his head. "I'm afraid not. Something is wrong with your back."

"It's all right, sir," Jack protested. "It doesn't bother me a bit."

The medical officer continued to shake his head. Jack continued to plead with him.

"My eyes are all right," Jack said. "So are my ears. I'm strong. I'm tall enough. And I'm not too skinny." Jack was frantic. The Army *had* to take him!

"You're right on all those points, young man," said the officer. "But that back of yours—it would never hold up."

Jack's thoughts flashed back to that afternoon in Harvard's football stadium. He remembered the pass he had caught from Torby. There was a big pile on him. A flash of intense pain.

"Sorry," the medical officer called after Jack as he walked slowly out of the examining room.

"I'll be back," Jack said quietly. The medical officer didn't hear those words. If he had, he would have admired the determination in the young man's voice.

And determined Jack was.

"Exercise will do it," he thought. "Plenty of exercise to build up strength in my back muscles."

As he drove back to Hyannis Port, Jack planned a program of exercises.

"Weight lifting," he told himself. "Lifting weights will build up my shoulder and back muscles."



For an hour every day, Jack lifted iron weights, increasing the number of pounds as he felt his back muscles getting stronger.

He chinned himself each day until he could do twenty-five pull-ups on the parallel bar. He ran up and down the sandy beach along Nantucket Sound to strengthen his leg muscles. He rowed a boat, which was good for back and stomach muscles.

After six months of this tough exercising, Jack was ready to try again to enlist. He decided this time to try for the Navy. He was sure he would pass the examination until he remembered his Army examination. Then he started worrying.

The physical examination was over. Once more Jack stood in front of a medical officer's desk. He was silent as the officer looked over the papers in front of him. His heart was pounding. The medical officer looked up. "This is it," Jack thought. "Will I make it, or . . ." He left that thought unfinished.

"Welcome aboard, Kennedy!" The officer put out his hand. Jack had made it! He had been accepted by the Navy! That was one of the happiest moments in Jack Kennedy's life.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *"So This Is How It Feels To Be Killed"*

Ensign Jack Kennedy walked toward the drill field of the torpedo-boat training station at Melville, Rhode Island. Sea gulls dipped and swooped in the blue skies overhead. Their shrill cries mingled with the shouts of the men on the field. The greenish waters of Narragansett Bay sparkled under a bright sun.

Fifteen months had passed since Jack had joined the Navy. He had been made an officer, but he was far from happy with what the Navy had asked him to do.

His country had been at war for over a year. It had started in December, 1941, when Japanese bomber planes had roared out of the sky over Hawaii and rained bombs on the American fleet anchored in Pearl Harbor. Most of the ships in the fleet were sunk in that sneak attack. The United States had quickly declared war on Japan and its allies. Now Americans were fighting in many parts of the world. But Jack Kennedy was safe in Rhode Island, when he longed to be fighting, too.

Feeling rather glum, he stopped at the edge of a drill field to watch a game of touch football which some of the men were playing. He was wearing a sweater with no insignia on it to show that he was an officer.

"Hey! Want to join us?" one of the players called.

"Sure. Don't mind if I do." Jack called back.

Jack took the ball. He tossed a looping pass to his right end. The end caught it and started for the goal. An opposing player charged into the end and shoved him to the ground.

"Hold it!" Jack shouted.

He trotted over to the player who had shoved the pass catcher.

"You get a fifteen-yard penalty for shoving," Jack said.

"Says who?"

"I do. You don't shove in this game. You touch. That's the rule," Jack explained.

"So what do you know about the rules? Did you ever play before?"

"I've played a bit," Jack replied.



*In January, 1944, young Jack Kennedy was in Los Angeles, Cal., a twenty-six-year-old Navy lieutenant.*



The argument over the rules was ended by the blast of a whistle calling the players to class. The players walked off the field.

“Who does that skinny kid think he is?” the rule breaker, Paul Fay, asked his companion.

Fay found out the next day. The “skinny kid” turned out to be his instructor.

Jack had completed his training at Melville and earned his “PT Boat Driver” rating in two months’ time. He had done so well that he had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, Junior Grade. He had also been made an instructor. Now he was teaching other men how to fight when he himself wanted to be fighting.

“We’ll have a short class today, men,” Instructor Kennedy began when Fay and the others had taken their seats. “We’re just going to go over what we’ve been studying about making a fast getaway when under attack by the enemy. Then we’ll go out on the water and see if we’ve learned our lesson. Remember Rule No. 1—instant response to every command.”

Half an hour later the 77-foot PT boat used in training was running through the water of Narragansett Bay at half speed.

“Full speed ahead!” Instructor Kennedy barked out the command.

There was a moment’s hesitation before the boat leaped ahead at full throttle.

“Full rudder left!” Kennedy snapped another order.

The long, narrow torpedo boat threw up a sheet of water as she curved into a sharp left turn.

“Bring her true on!”

The boat straightened out and sliced the waters at full speed.

“Stop all engines.”

The boat slowed to a stop. She rose and fell gently on the cold swells of the bay.

“Engineer,” Kennedy called out, “when I ordered full speed ahead, you took her up too slowly.”

“Yes, sir!”

“One second—a split second delay, and this boat could be sunk. Remember, our main defense against enemy shellfire in these paper-thin boats is our ability to run, to get away fast.”

The trainees listened carefully to every word Kennedy spoke.

“As for you, helmsman,” Kennedy turned to the man at the steering wheel, “you weren’t too sharp on my ‘full rudder left.’ Speed plus the

ability to make fast, darting turns is our only hope when the enemy starts dropping shells all around us.”

“Yes, sir,” the helmsman replied.

“All right, men. That’s it for today. We’ll take her in. Start Engine Two. Half throttle.”

The training craft headed back to its base.

It was growing dark as Lieutenant Kennedy entered the Administration Building.

“Got something for you, sir,” a young sailor called to Kennedy. There was a big grin on the sailor’s face. Kennedy was popular with the enlisted men. They all knew how badly he wanted to get into the thick of the fighting.

Lieutenant Kennedy took the paper from the sailor’s outstretched hand. One quick glance and his heart leaped with joy.

“This is it!” he said happily. “I have my orders!”

At long last, Lieutenant John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s dream had come true. He held in his hands orders transferring him to the South Pacific. He was to proceed to Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Two at Tulagi, one of the Solomon Islands, southeast of New Guinea in the Pacific Ocean.

Three days later Kennedy was on his way. He went by plane to San Francisco. Then he took a long voyage on a slow troop transport boat across the Pacific. Finally he reached Tulagi where he was put in command of PT-109.

PT-109 was a battle-scarred veteran of the Mosquito Fleet, as the PT boats making up the squadron were called. She was a fine boat, eighty feet long, and could speed fifty miles per hour through the warm Pacific waters. Four torpedo tubes lined her sides. A small cannon stood firmly planted on her bow. Machine guns, always ready, were placed fore and aft. She was as thin as a matchbox. And her only defense under attack was her ability to dart in and out, swerve and curve at high speed when the enemy was after her. She had three 1,350-horsepower engines.

For three months, PT-109 under Skipper Kennedy prowled the danger-filled waters of the Solomon Islands. On moonless nights, with her running lights shut off, PT-109 sneaked in and out of the islands. On one dark night she silently snaked close to shore.

“There’s a nest of Jap landing barges dead ahead,” the lookout at the bow informed Skipper Kennedy.

"We'll take her in a little closer."

PT-109 crept nearer the island on one engine at quarter throttle.

"Fire One! Fire Two!" Kennedy's crisp order shattered the silence.

Two deadly "fish"—torpedoes—shot from the torpedo tubes, aimed at the landing barges.

"Reverse course! All engines full ahead!"

PT-109 made a sweeping curve at her commander's orders. Her three powerful engines roared as the sleek craft raced away from the cannon and machine gun fire that followed her attack on the landing barges.

PT-109, Skipper Kennedy and his crew completed thirty prowl patrols, raking Jap shore installations with machine gun fire, launching torpedoes at enemy warships. Jack took his boat and crew through these thirty missions unharmed. PT-109 lived a charmed life. A "lucky" boat, the crew called her.



*Kennedy (right) and his crewmen on PT-109 "somewhere in the South Pacific."*



Then came PT-109's thirty-first mission. It was after midnight on August 2, 1943. Nearly six hours earlier, PT-109 had left her base at Rendova, a tiny dot of land off New Georgia Island.

The night was black—black as ink. Not a star shone in the sky. The only light came from the flashes of heavy cannon fire on a distant island. PT-109 was on patrol duty in Blackett Strait. She was wallowing along in the inky darkness on Engine Two at half throttle. The other engines were idle. PT boats on prow patrol duty always moved at slow speed. The roar of their three powerful engines at full speed could attract the attention of the enemy. White water, thrown up behind a fast moving boat, could flash a signal to the watchful foe.

"It's a quiet night tonight, Skipper," commented Ensign Ross, Kennedy's executive officer, as the boat moved along.

Kennedy's eyes narrowed to slits as he tried to pierce the darkness. The rumble of cannon fire could be heard far away.

"Right you are, Barney. No Japs around. We'll head back for base in half an hour." Kennedy looked at the luminous dial of his watch. It was two o'clock.

Kennedy and Ross were on deck. The eleven other crew members were at their stations, ready for action.

Suddenly, the silence on the boat was shattered by the shout of the lookout in the bow.

"Enemy ship at two o'clock!"

Racing out of the darkness, bearing down on PT-109, just to the right of the torpedo boat's bow, the black hulk of a Japanese destroyer came charging at full speed.

"General quarters!" Kennedy shouted. PT-109 was under attack.

"All engines, full ahead!" Kennedy barked another order.

There was no time to get up speed. PT-109 was sluggish. Kennedy tried desperately to put his boat in position to fire torpedoes at the onrushing Japanese destroyer. It was too late!

The Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* smashed into the smaller torpedo boat. There was a splintering crash. Shouts of pain split the air as men were tossed into the water.

The *Amagiri* sliced PT-109 in half.

Skipper Kennedy was hurled through the air. His body bounced into the deck well of his severed boat. A fiery pain shot through his back as he hit the deck.

"So this is how it feels to be killed," he thought, as he lay in agony.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Jack and Mac*

A blinding flash of burning gasoline shot into the air as PT-109's gas tanks exploded. The flaming gasoline dropped to the water. It spread out into a wide circle and burned fiercely at the stern of the boat.

Kennedy struggled to his feet, gasping with pain from his injured back. The rear half of the boat had already plunged to the bottom of the sea. Airtight tanks kept the front half afloat.

Kennedy eyed the pool of flaming gasoline. He was afraid it might drift near the half of the boat which was still afloat and set it afire.

"Everybody overboard!" he ordered.

The men who were with him obeyed promptly. The pool of flame drifted away.

"Back in boat," the young skipper commanded.

He counted heads. Only four of his crew were with him.

"Skipper! Mr. Kennedy!"

The shout came out of the darkness. Kennedy recognized the voice of Gunner's Mate Charley Harris.

"McMahon's been burned bad." Harris shouted.

Quickly Kennedy found the ship's electric lantern.

"Take the light," he ordered Radioman Maguire. "Aim it at Harris."

Kennedy plunged into the water. He swam toward Harris, who was holding McMahon's head out of the water.

"I'll take him," Kennedy said.

"Okay, Skipper," gasped Harris. "You go ahead. I can't make it."

The waters were choppy in the light breeze. It was tough going. Kennedy towed McMahon back to the bow end of the boat a hundred yards away. Crewmates lifted the injured man aboard. Kennedy headed back for Harris.

"I can't make it, Skipper," Harris said again when Kennedy swam up to him.

"Try!" was Kennedy's crisp answer.

"I can't swim. Can't move my left leg. Banged it on a torpedo tube when I went overboard."

"Make a try at it. Use your other leg."

Harris moaned.

"For a man from Boston, Harris, you're sure putting on a great show out here," Kennedy snapped angrily. His voice was stern because he wanted to make Harris put up a fight for his life.

Kennedy took Harris in tow and began to swim. He had farther to go this time because the floating half of the boat was drifting away in the current. But he made it, and Harris was lifted into the boat.

Other members of the crew, who had been tossed into the water when the *Amagiri* had sliced PT-109 in half, had already climbed aboard.

Kennedy called the roll. Crewmen Kirksey and Marney failed to answer.

For an hour the survivors called out the names of these men. Kennedy swam a wide circle around the floating hull, searching for the two missing crew members. They were never found.

Eleven men had survived the crash. McMahon's face, right leg, and left arm were badly burned. Johnson, another engineer, was sick and almost unconscious from swallowing gasoline. Harris' left leg was badly cut and burned.

The men huddled on the bow of the boat.

"What do you want to do when the Japs come out after us?" Kennedy asked. "Fight or surrender?"

"Fight with what?" one of the crewmen asked.

They counted the weapons still on the boat. There were six automatic pistols, Kennedy's own revolver, two long knives, and one pocketknife. The only light saved was the electric lantern. There were several pairs of heavy, soggy shoes. There was no food.

"We'll fight if we have to," Kennedy said quietly. No one questioned his leadership.

What was left of PT-109 was sinking lower in the water. Little deck space was left. Soon there was just enough deck space for McMahon and Johnson.

"All able-bodied men into the water," Kennedy ordered.

Throughout the rest of the night, Kennedy and eight of the crew hung on to the side of the slowly sinking hull. When the tropical sun came up in the morning, the men watched the sky, expecting Jap planes to come roaring down and rake them with bullets.

The morning passed slowly. About ten o'clock the remaining half



of PT-109 turned over. Johnson and McMahon were tossed into the water. But PT-109 was still afloat, and the men clung to it, or treaded water. All around them were islands which were held by the Japanese. On the nearest island, a mile away, they could see action at a Japanese army camp. They knew that they might be spotted at any minute.

PT-109 was settling lower into the water. Kennedy was afraid it might sink. He wanted to get the men ashore before dark. He swirled around, treading water. About three miles away he saw a small island.

"We'll go there," he told the men, pointing it out. "That one is too small to have Japs on it."

He knew he must keep his men's spirits up, and he hoped he was telling the truth.

A plank which had held the cannon in place on PT-109 had broken loose.

"Tie the lantern and your guns and your shoes to that plank," Kennedy ordered. "You men can hang on to the plank as you swim. I'll take McMahon."

Kennedy said this as if taking McMahon were as simple as helping him into an automobile.

"Turn over, Mac," he said. "Float on your back."

Kennedy slipped a large, rubber, balloon-like life jacket over the smaller life belt McMahon was wearing. He took two straps of the jacket and tied them together into a loop.

"All right, men. Let's go."

Kennedy took the loop in his teeth and started swimming toward the island, towing McMahon behind him.

The other men looked at him in amazement. Did the skipper really think he could tow McMahon for three miles!

But Skipper Kennedy was already on his way, swimming powerfully with a breast stroke.

An hour passed.

"How are you doing, Mac?" Kennedy asked. As he spoke, he gulped in salt water.

"Okay, Skipper. Thanks to you," Mac replied.

A second hour passed. The smaller island didn't seem to be coming any nearer as Kennedy raised his head.

"Still okay, Mac?"

"I'm all right, Mr. Kennedy. How are *you* doing?"

"Fine," Kennedy mumbled, through the loop in his teeth.

Three hours passed, then four. Kennedy was such a fine swimmer that he was pulling away from the men with the plank, even though he was towing McMahon.

"Have we got much farther to go, Mr. Kennedy?"

"Not much," mumbled Kennedy. "We'll get there."

The outlines of the island were much plainer now. Kennedy was making good progress.

"You getting tired, Mr. Kennedy?"

Kennedy took the strap out of his mouth. He raised his head. They had almost reached the island. Kennedy looked at his waterproof watch. He couldn't believe his eyes. He had been towing McMahon for almost five hours!

A few minutes later, Kennedy felt bottom.

"We're going in, Mac," he said. "See if you can walk."

They struggled through the surf. The bottom was covered with sharp, jagged coral which slashed the soles of their feet.

With bleeding feet and tired arms, Kennedy helped McMahon up on the beach. There were some bushes across the narrow strip of sand where they could hide if any Japs should suddenly appear. Kennedy half carried McMahon to the bushes and eased him to the ground. Then he collapsed, vomiting up salt water which he had swallowed during the long swim.

He looked at his watch again and shook his head. Since the *Amagiri* had slashed the PT-109 in two, Lieutenant (j.g.) John Fitzgerald Kennedy had been in the water for sixteen hours.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *A Long Swim*

Fifteen minutes later the nine other members of PT-109's crew pushed their plank up on the narrow beach. They jogged across the sand and hid in the low brush by the side of their exhausted skipper.

"There's a Jap landing barge out there. Armed to the teeth," one of the crewmen gasped out. "I don't think they spotted us, though."

Kennedy parted the bushes for a better view. He saw the barge, half a mile off shore. But it continued on its way. No one on it had seen the survivors of the sunken patrol torpedo boat.

"Barney, take Zinser and search this island," Kennedy ordered Barney Ross, who was one of his officers.

The two men left and were back in five minutes. This island was only a tiny speck of land in the broad Pacific Ocean.

"All clear, Skipper," reported Barney. "No Japs."

Kennedy looked up. He saw a few coconuts hanging from the limbs of the tall trees, bending gracefully in the light breeze. They were green.

"And no food, either," Kennedy said.

It was now seven o'clock. The sun was setting. The men, exhausted from their swim, lay quietly, trying to get back their strength. They wondered why no search party had been sent out from their base at Rendova to help them. Other PT boats had been near when the Japanese warship had sliced their boat in two.

"PT-169 was close," said one of the crewmen. "Her crew must have seen what happened."

"Yeah," agreed a friend. "But maybe they figured we all got killed."

And that is just what had occurred. The commander of PT-169 had reported the collision. But he and his men agreed that no one could have lived through the crash and the explosion that followed.

It was growing dark on the island. Although Kennedy had been without sleep for over thirty-six hours, he couldn't sleep now. Thoughts raced through his always active mind. He had to get his men back to the base. He was their leader. They looked up to him.



How could he get them rescued, he wondered. Then he had an idea.

Tired as he was, Kennedy got to his feet. He gritted his teeth to hold back a gasp as pain shot through his injured back. He looked at another tiny island to the east. He didn't know its name, but he did know that beyond it lay water called Ferguson Passage. Almost every night the PT Squadron went through that passage on their way to search for Japanese ships which might be bringing more troops to the island.

"Barney," he said, "our boats should be coming through Ferguson Passage pretty soon. I'm going to swim out into the passage and signal for help."

"Without any rest? You can't make it, Skipper," Ross protested.

"I'll make it," Kennedy replied. "Get me the lantern."

Kennedy put on a life belt. He painfully pulled on a pair of wet shoes over his cut feet. The shoes would hamper him in the water, but he must have them for walking over the razor-edged coral. He slung his .38 caliber revolver around his neck by a leather strap. He took the battery-powered lantern and headed for the water.

He turned as he waded in. "If I find a boat, I'll flash the lantern twice," he said.

Kennedy plunged in the water. The pain in his back was pure agony. He was tired and sick at his stomach. But his determination drove him on.

"Wonder if we'll ever see him again," Ross said soberly as the men watched their skipper's head bob in the water.

Kennedy reached the next island just as the last rays of daylight were fading. He staggered around to the opposite side of the island and waded out into the waters of Ferguson Passage. He started swimming slowly toward the center of the passage.

Suddenly, a large, dark object swam right in front of him. A shark! Kennedy blinked his light and splashed the water. The shark swam away. The waters around those islands were filled with man-eating sharks and needle-toothed barracudas.

Kennedy swam out to the middle of the passage. He stayed there, treading water. An hour went by. No boats appeared. Far off in the west, near an island named Gizo, he saw flashes of cannon fire. He knew what that meant. The PT boats were already meeting the enemy. That night, of all nights, they had taken a different passage to go into action.

Weak and chilled from his long stay in the water, Kennedy could

hardly make it back to shore. He rested for a few minutes. Then he crossed the little island. Again, he slipped into the water and started for the island where he had left his men.

A strong current caught him. He was too tired to fight it, and was swept out to sea, away from the island and his crew. He swam as hard as he could. But it was no use. The current was too strong. Kennedy turned over on his back, floating to get some rest. The current kept carrying him farther out. He fought to stay awake. He kicked off his heavy, soaked shoes, which were pulling him down. All night long he drifted. Time after time he felt he would pass out. But he clung to the lantern. He couldn't drop that. It was his only hope for signalling to a PT boat.

When morning came, Kennedy saw that the current which had carried him out to sea had brought him back again. He was in almost the same spot where he had entered the water hours before. He had spent the night being swept out and back by the restless current.

Once more, after a brief rest on the sand, Kennedy started back to the island he now called "home." This time the currents were friendly. He reached the island and crawled up on the beach, feverish, vomiting salt water, and half out of his mind.

"It's the skipper!" A shout went up from the men.

They rushed over to Kennedy. Lifting him gently, they carried him behind the low brush.

Kennedy looked up at Ross.

"Barney, you try it tonight," he said and lost consciousness.

But Barney Ross had no better luck than Kennedy. No PTs came through Ferguson Passage that night, either.

The men suffered from hunger pains and dry, parched mouths as they spent the third day on their tiny island. Kennedy, who was rested and feeling a bit better, made another decision.

"We've got to move out of here," he told his crew. "Do you see that island?" He pointed to a larger island, southwest and nearer Ferguson Passage. "It looks as if there were plenty of coconut trees over there. Let's go."

The men moved their plank raft into the water. Kennedy and Ross helped McMahon into the surf.

"Okay, Mac. Here we go again," Kennedy said. He took the straps of McMahon's life vest in his mouth again. It was a three-hour swim. Again, Kennedy towed Mac all the way.

The lieutenant had been right, there were more coconuts on the

new island. Some ripe nuts were lying on the sand. The men broke them open. They gulped the sweet liquid and chewed on the stringy coconut meat. Then they were sick. But they had some nourishment—their first in three days. It rained that night, and the men collected fresh water.

"This is better," Kennedy said to Ross the next day. "But not much. And we're still a long way from home base."

Kennedy shaded his eyes and studied another island not too far away. "That's Nauru Island, if I remember my maps," he said. "Come on. You and I are going over there."

Kennedy and Ross went back in the water. It was an hour's swim.

"Take it easy, Barney," Kennedy warned, as they neared shore. "There could be Japs on this island."

The two men kept low in the water. They dashed across the beach and threw themselves behind a clump of bushes. Exploring Nauru was painful. Kennedy's and Ross's feet were swollen from coral cuts. They found no Japs, but they did make a life-saving discovery.

"Barney, come here," Kennedy called.

Barney joined Kennedy. The skipper was standing by a wooden box about the size of an orange crate. The men broke it open. It was filled with hard candy and bags of hardtack. A short distance away they found a small palm-thatched hut. Beside the hut was a one-man canoe, and in it was a keg of water.

For the first time in four days Kennedy and Ross had something to eat beside coconuts, and fresh water to drink. As they were eating and drinking, they spotted two natives paddling by in a dug-out canoe. They shouted and waved their arms, trying to attract the natives' attention. But the natives, apparently thinking that Kennedy and Ross were Japs, hurriedly paddled away.

Kennedy and Ross spent the rest of the day hiding in the brush, looking out for Japs, and hoping that the natives might return. That night Kennedy took the canoe and went out into Ferguson Passage again to wait, hoping a PT boat might come through. None came. Kennedy paddled back. He loaded the canoe with the food and water. He left Ross on Nauru Island and paddled back to the rest of his crew.

The food and water were divided among the men. To Kennedy's surprise, the two natives he had seen from Nauru Island were with them. One of the crewmen had made them understand that he and his mates were Americans, and the natives were friendly.

The next day, August 6, five days after PT-109 had been sunk,



Kennedy and the natives paddled back to get Ross. They met him on the way in the water. Ross was swimming back to join his skipper and the crew. They pulled Ross aboard and continued to Nauru.

"I've got an idea, Barney," Kennedy said. "It's our only hope." The four men were crouched down behind the brush screening them from the water.

Kennedy picked up a broken coconut shell. He took out his pocket-knife. In shaky, uneven letters he carved a message on the shell:

NATIVE KNOWS POSIT	NAURU ISL
HE CAN PILOT	11 ALIVE NEED
SMALL BOAT	

Kennedy handed Barney the shell.

"Nauru Island," Barney read aloud. "Native knows position. He can pilot. Eleven alive. Need small boat." Barney grinned. "That tells the story, Skipper. But how are you going to get these guys to take it to Rendova?"

Kennedy took the coconut shell back. He handed it to one of the natives. "Rendova! Rendova!" He pointed to the south. "Americans! Rendova."

Kennedy repeated the words over and over. Rendova was the PT Squadron's base.

Finally the natives grinned and nodded their heads. They got up, went to their canoe, and Kennedy and Ross watched as the natives paddled out of sight to the south.

"Well, what do you think, Skipper?"

Kennedy shrugged his shoulders. "We'll just have to wait and see."

They waited that night. Each hour that passed lowered their hopes of rescue. The next day went by with no sign that Kennedy's coconut-shell message had been delivered.

Shortly after dark on the night of August 7, the rescuers arrived. Kennedy's message had been received.

As dawn was breaking on the morning of August 8, the rescue boat, filled with eleven happy men, pulled up to the dock at the Rendova base. The men were singing:

"Jesus loves me, this I know  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to Him belong,  
They are weak, but He is strong."



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *All For One*

Lieutenant Kennedy was lying on a narrow cot in his Quonset hut on Rendova Island. He stared at the ceiling, his thoughts still with the official piece of paper he had just read. He picked the paper up and glanced at it again:

"For extremely heroic conduct as commanding officer of Motor Torpedo Boat 109, unmindful of personal danger, Lieutenant Kennedy unhesitatingly braved the difficulties and hazards of darkness to direct rescue operations, swimming many hours to secure aid and food after he had succeeded in getting his crew ashore.

His courage, endurance, and excellent leadership contributed to the saving of several lives and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

The citation Jack had just read was signed by Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet. Kennedy had been awarded the Purple Heart and the Navy and Marine Medals.

"What a swell bunch of guys," Kennedy said, half-aloud.

He was thinking about the men who had been with him through the six dangerous days that followed the sinking of PT-109. The men were gone now — Barney, Mac, Harris, all of them. They had been shipped back to the United States for a well-deserved rest. But not Lieutenant Kennedy. When the orders had come for the entire crew of PT-109 to return to the States, Kennedy had gone at once to the squadron commander.

"Commander, I want to stay on," Kennedy said. "I want a second tour of duty."

"You're still sick. You're too weak," was Commander Cluster's reply.

Kennedy insisted.

"Well, okay, then," the commander had agreed. "But you are not to go into action until you've had three weeks of rest."

Now the three weeks were over, and Lieutenant Kennedy was glad to be going back into action. He took command of a boat — the PT-59, the next day. But his command was a short one. He grew sicker and



sicker. His body burned with the fever of malaria. His bad back, which had been hurt again in the crash of the PT-109, was so painful that he was in agony as he went about his duties. In November he was shipped back to the United States for medical treatment.

In a Navy hospital near Boston, surgeons operated on his spine. It was a delicate operation. A metal disc was screwed into his spinal column.

While he was still in the hospital, Kennedy received heart-breaking news. His brother Joe had been killed in a plane explosion over the English Channel. His brother Joe, whom he had played with and fought with, loved and admired! Months of sadness followed for Jack Kennedy and the whole Kennedy family.

As the months passed Jack became more and more restless. He could not go back into the Navy because of his injured spine. For a while he tried being a newspaper reporter. He went to San Francisco and wrote stories about the United Nations when it was founded there. He traveled to Germany where President Truman was meeting with leaders of other nations. And he wrote newspaper stories about those meetings, too.

When he returned to the United States he was still restless and did not know what to do with himself. One day he talked it over with his father. They were sitting in the library of their home at Hyannis Port.

"What now, Jack?" his father asked.

"Haven't made my mind up yet, Father."

"Have you ever thought about politics?"

Jack nodded his head. He had thought a lot about entering politics, running for an office. He knew his father would like to have one of his sons run for political office and follow in the footsteps of his grandfathers. That had been the future planned for Joe, Jr., if he had lived.

"You've got the brains for it," Joseph Kennedy continued. "People like you. You've proven your ability as a leader. You know a lot about world affairs. But you didn't like being a reporter very much, did you?"

"Not really, Father. A reporter writes about what other people are doing. I want to do things myself."

"Have you anything particular in mind, Jack?"

"Yes, I have. I've been thinking about running for Congress. Do you think I could ever be elected a Representative from Massachusetts?"

"I know you can," Mr. Kennedy boomed back his answer.

So Jack decided to try.

The whole Kennedy family rallied around him — father, mother, sisters and brothers. It was all for one and one for all. They knew that Jack's name had to be advertised. They knew he had to meet people — all kinds of people who might vote for him.

Jack knew it, too. He rang every doorbell in the section of Boston which he would represent if he won. It was called the Eleventh Boston District. He dashed in and out of police stations, firehouses, and taverns.

"I'm Jack Kennedy. Running for Representative," he said to an old man one day. "I'd like your support."

"Are you Honey Fitz's grandson?"

Jack grinned. A lock of hair flopped up and down as he nodded his head.

"Then you've got my vote, lad," the man promised.

On the street Jack saw a woman struggling with a big bag of groceries and a squirming infant.

"Let me help you, ma'am," he said, holding out his arms for the baby. He carried the baby up three flights of stairs to the top floor of a shabby, run-down apartment. And he won another vote.

While Jack was busy meeting people and making speeches, his mother and the girls were busy, too.

"Look, Mother!" said Eunice Kennedy one morning. She swirled around. Across the front of her skirt in big white letters was printed:

"Vote for John F. Kennedy!"

*When Kennedy ran for Congress in 1946, he had no trouble getting many women's votes—both young and old.*



"We'll all wear skirts like that," Mrs. Kennedy said. And for the rest of the campaign she and her daughters never appeared in public without wearing their printed skirts. They buzzed through the Eleventh District like a swarm of bees. Mrs. Kennedy gave teas. She and her daughters spoke to women's clubs and PTA groups.

On the night of the election, a worn-out Jack Kennedy went to see a movie. His back ached after his hard campaign, and he wanted to be by himself.

After the movie, he hurried back to his election headquarters. He halted at the doorway, and a big smile spread over his face. He didn't have to ask anyone if he had won or lost. What he saw told him the answer.

There was Grandpa Honey Fitz. He was climbing on a table.

"Everybody now," Honey Fitz called out. "Everybody join in."

Honey Fitz started singing "Sweet Adeline." It was the song he had sung when he had been elected mayor of Boston. Now he was singing it to celebrate the victory of his grandson, who had won the election by getting twice as many votes as the man he ran against.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was on his way. He was on his way to the highest office in the United States. He was elected twice more as Representative to Congress, serving a total of six years.

In 1952, Kennedy decided to run for the United States Senate. Running against him was a Republican named Henry Cabot Lodge. He was a popular man in Massachusetts. Another Republican, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was running for President that year. People in Massachusetts felt that if Eisenhower won, Lodge would win too.

This didn't bother Jack Kennedy. He tore into his new campaign with all the drive, spirit, energy, and courage he had shown on the fields of play and the fields of war.

"Second place is failure." Jack remembered those words spoken to him by his father many years before.

Now all of Massachusetts felt the full force of the Kennedy family. Brothers, sisters, mother, and father worked night and day throughout the state for Jack's election.

"Where to today, Jack?" his brother Robert asked.

"Cape Cod. I'm speaking at Buzzards Bay, Falmouth, and Hyannis, this morning."

"Will you be back this afternoon?"

"Not a chance. I'm hopping across-state. Amherst and Holyoke this afternoon and a big rally at Springfield tonight."



Bobby shook his head in wonderment. Where did his brother get all his energy?

In cities and towns where Jack wasn't speaking, ten other Kennedys were asking for votes for him. Even Teddy, the youngest Kennedy, who was only twenty years old, appeared at rallies, speaking up for his brother.

Mrs. Rose Kennedy gave dozens of teas. She and Mr. Kennedy held receptions. Jack attended these, shaking hands, smiling, and speaking a few words to everyone who came.

Jack Kennedy stated his political beliefs quite simply. His words went to the hearts and minds of all who heard him.

"I want a better life for every American," he stated. "I want to see every American walk with his head up, as safe as possible against misfortunes that are not of his own making. I want every American to be confident that he can provide his children with opportunities for a fuller and more useful life. This is my political creed."

When the votes were counted on election night, General Eisenhower was elected President by a landslide of votes. In Massachusetts every Republican running in that state for office was elected too. All except one — Henry Cabot Lodge. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who was a Democrat, had defeated Mr. Lodge by 70,000 votes.

Representative Kennedy was now Senator Kennedy. He was off to Washington where he would meet a lovely young lady who would become his wife. He would also face a decision that could mean his life or death.

*Taking a day off from politics, Senator Kennedy enjoys a day of sailing.*





## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *A Profile in Courage*

Senator Kennedy leaned across the dinner table.

"Would you like to go to a show with me some night soon?" he asked with a boyish smile.

"I think that would be very nice," the lovely young girl opposite him replied.

That is how John Kennedy asked Miss Jacqueline Bouvier for their first date.

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, called "Jackie," was a beautiful young lady of twenty-three. She was slender and graceful. Large, dark eyes smiled at Jack out of a bright, alert face.

One year later Jack asked Jackie to be his wife. She agreed, and they decided to be married on September 12, 1953.

On September 11, the big plane carrying Senator Kennedy from Washington on his way to Newport, Rhode Island, for his wedding, touched down at Logan International Airport in Boston. Kennedy walked down the steps from the plane. He planned to take a smaller plane for the hop across Massachusetts and Narragansett Bay to Newport.

"This way, Senator."

Kennedy looked closely at the man who had spoken to him.

"Cliff Fuller!" Kennedy said, his voice filled with pleasant surprise. "Haven't seen you since we were at Choate together."

"How have you been, Jack — er, I mean Senator?" Cliff Fuller asked, a shy grin on his face.

"I'm still Jack to you, Cliff," replied Senator Kennedy. "And what in the world are you doing here?"

"One of my pilots is going to fly you to Newport. I'm manager here. The plane's right over there. All set to go."

Kennedy and his Choate schoolmate chatted about their prep school days as they walked across the field to the waiting plane.

"Happy landings, Senator," Fuller called out as Jack climbed aboard.

"Same to you, Cliff."

*Jack and Jackie stroll down the pier in Hyannis Port, Mass., to board the family yacht Marlin for a sail on Nantucket Sound.*



The wedding was held on the following day. It was one of the biggest society events ever to take place in Newport.

As the Senator's wife, Jackie found that at first it tired her just to watch the Kennedy family at the many games they were always playing. But soon Jackie was in the thick of those games, playing touch football with a will-to-win spirit that matched her husband's.

The happy couple returned to Washington after their honeymoon. As a new senator, Jack was a busy young man. Meetings, conferences, and speechmaking kept him on the go. His back was often painful. In the spring of 1954, it became so bad he had to use crutches almost all the time. But he would not use them in public. He did not want the people to think he was asking for sympathy.

"Here, take these things." Jack handed his crutches to his assistant as they got out of the car in front of a large auditorium.

Jack straightened up. An agonizing pain shot through his back. But he crossed the sidewalk, entered the door and walked down the aisle to the speaker's platform as erectly as a West Point cadet.

One evening Jack entered the living room of his beautiful home in Virginia, a short distance from Washington. He was on crutches.

"I'd rather die than spend the rest of my life on these things," he said to his wife.

He tossed the crutches aside and sat down in a rocking chair.

"Please, Jack. Don't say such a thing," Jackie replied. A frown darkened her face. She knew that he was in pain. She knew also that he had talked with some doctors about having an operation and that he planned to talk with others.

A few weeks later Senator Kennedy sat in the office of a famous surgeon in New York City.

"I've studied the reports of the physical examinations you've been going through," the surgeon said.

"And what's the answer, Doctor?" Kennedy asked.

"Do you want me to tell you what your chances are? Your chances of coming out alive if you have an operation on your back?"

"Go ahead, Doctor," Kennedy said quietly.

The doctor hesitated a few moments.

"I would say there is one chance in sixteen."

Senator Kennedy pushed himself to his feet. He took his crutches. He looked down into the doctor's serious face.

"How soon can you operate?" he asked.

Two operations had to be performed to repair the damage to Jack's back. He took the one chance in sixteen and won.

Senator Kennedy was out of action for six months after his second operation. He was out of action, but he wasn't idle. Jack Kennedy always had to *do* something.

"Just finished writing another chapter." Jack looked up as his wife came across the lawn at the Kennedys' estate at Palm Beach, Florida. "It's about Sam Houston." Houston was the Governor of Texas who fought to keep Texas from leaving the Union during the Civil War. Because of his stand, Houston was forced out of politics.

"Wonderful, Jack," said Jackie. "I've just finished reading what you wrote about Daniel Webster. It's really very good." Webster was another early American politician who fought to save the Union.

Jack put down his pad of paper and pen. He was writing a book about courage in politics. His book was about famous men in American history who showed great courage by standing up for what they believed was right. He called the book *Profiles in Courage*.

The book about courage, written by a man who himself had shown

*Senator Kennedy, addressing a New York crowd in the fall of 1960, has entered the presidential race.*





great courage, became very popular. Thousands of copies were sold. The book won the Pulitzer Prize, a \$500 award given each year for fine writing. Jack gave the \$500 to the United Negro College Fund.

In May, 1955, John Fitzgerald Kennedy walked onto the floor of the United States Senate for the first time in eight months. Every senator present stood up and applauded him.

"Those of us who have gotten to know him have for him a very warm and high place in our affections," Senator William Knowland, the Republican leader, said.

In 1956, Senator Kennedy almost became a candidate for a higher office. A Democratic convention was held in Chicago to select the men who would run for President and Vice-President of the United States. Adlai Stevenson was chosen to run for President. Votes for Kennedy to run with him for Vice-President piled up fast.

Kennedy and an aide watched the voting by the delegates from each state, over the television set in a hotel room in Chicago. At last the senator left the room to take a hot bath, since his back was aching.

"Kentucky has just given you its votes," the aide shouted at him. "Congratulations, Jack!"

"I'm not in yet," Kennedy called back. "Wait."

Kennedy was right. When the votes were all counted, Estes Kefauver had been nominated by the Democrats to run for Vice-President.

Jack's failure to get the nomination for Vice-President was really lucky for him, because Stevenson and Kefauver were defeated by Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. And in losing, Jack gained greater popularity. Millions of Americans who saw the handsome, smiling young man on television took him to their hearts.

In Massachusetts, Kennedy was more popular than ever. He ran for re-election to the Senate in 1958 and won more votes than any man running for office in Massachusetts ever had won before.

This encouraged him to aim for the highest office in the land. He decided to run for the office of President of the United States.

*Candidates Senator Kennedy and Vice-President Richard Nixon face each other in a televised campaign debate.*





## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Mr. President*

The day was bright but cold under the winter sun. Gusts of wind chilled the huge crowd standing shoulder to shoulder in front of the Capitol Building in Washington, D. C. All eyes were fixed on a young man as he placed one hand on a Bible and spoke in a clear, firm voice:

"I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy spoke those words as he took the oath of office making him the thirty-fifth President of the United States. He was forty-three years old, the youngest man ever to be elected to the highest office in the nation.

Minutes later, the chilled crowd forgot about the cold, biting winds. They were listening to their new President speak. He made one of the greatest speeches ever made by any man on becoming President of the United States.

"And so, my fellow Americans," President Kennedy said, "ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."

A roaring cheer went up from the crowd when the President finished his speech. He bowed his head, then turned to smile at his wife. She returned his smile with a big wink. That wink meant, "You've done fine, Mr. President."

No longer was John Fitzgerald Kennedy called Jack except in private. In public his wife always spoke of him as "the President." The same was true of his brother Bobby. President Kennedy had appointed Bobby to a very important position. Robert Kennedy was now the Attorney General of the United States. In private, he called the President "Johnny," but never in public.

Paul Fay, who had served with the President in the Navy, said, "I used to kid him all the time. But not any more. You just don't kid the President of the United States."

The President's job is a lonely one. He may have many old friends. But they do not feel that they can be as familiar with him as they once

were, because he holds such a high office. This does not mean that the President himself has changed. President Kennedy was just as warm-hearted and generous a man as he had ever been. As President, he did many kind things which most people knew nothing about. He didn't want them to know.

There was the time when he flew to Dallas, Texas, to visit Sam Rayburn. Mr. Rayburn had been a leader in the House of Representatives for many years. Mr. Rayburn was in a hospital, very ill. On Kennedy's way to Mr. Rayburn's room, a woman with tears in her eyes stopped him.

"Mr. President," she said, "my little boy is here. He has just been told that he will have to wear braces on his legs. He is so sad. Could you see him for a few minutes and cheer him up?"

The President was very busy. His plane was waiting to take him right back to Washington. But after visiting Mr. Rayburn, the President found time for the little boy with braces. He spent fifteen minutes chatting with him.

The President loved children, not just his own pretty little daughter Caroline, and his son John, Jr. He loved all children. He was concerned with the kind of world they must grow up in.

Often he worried about what would happen if the atom bomb ever had to be used. He was more worried than usual after a long talk with Nikita Khrushchev, the leader in Communist Russia. Russia has the

*Soviet Premier Krushchev greets President Kennedy at the Soviet Embassy in Vienna. Center, Foreign Minister Gromyko.*



*Outside Government House in Hamilton, Bermuda, President Kennedy stands with British Prime Minister Macmillan.*





atom bomb, too. When his talk with the Russian leader was over, the President spoke to a close friend.

"It doesn't really matter as far as you and I are concerned," he said to his friend. "What really matters is the children."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the President to everyone. But not to his daughter Caroline. To her, he was "Daddy," just as fathers are "Daddies" to their sons and daughters all over America. Caroline used to pop in and out of her father's office any time she wanted to, unless, of course, he was very busy with some big world problem. Then she would chat with her father's secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, in the office just outside the President's.

"Have you put any more pennies in the piggy bank?" Caroline asked Miss Lincoln. Caroline's father was too busy to see her that morning.

"Oh, yes, Caroline. And I put some nickels and dimes in, too," Miss Lincoln said, smiling.

Caroline picked up the piggy bank and shook it.

"Sounds as though you've got a big lot."

Caroline had given Miss Lincoln the gaily colored piggy bank. It stood on a shelf with the pictures of famous world leaders. There was the picture of Douglas MacArthur on one side of the piggy bank. On the other side was a picture of Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. All the pictures of famous leaders of the world had some writing on them, saying how much the leaders admired Caroline's father. The piggy bank

*Jacqueline Kennedy is greeted in New Delhi, India, by Prime Minister Nehru.*



*A young Queen and a young President: the Kennedys had dined with Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace, London.*





looked out of place standing there with all those important pictures. But Miss Lincoln loved it. It showed how much Caroline liked her.

Early one morning Caroline wandered into the Press Room of the White House. This is the room where the reporters write their stories about what the President is doing.

"What's your daddy going to do this morning?" a reporter asked.

"I don't know," Caroline answered. "He's upstairs, putting on his shoes and socks."

That afternoon, Caroline popped in to see her father. He had two of his assistants with him, but smiled and sat back when his little daughter came in. He was happy to have a few moments when he could forget the important matters that were always with him.

"Hi, Caroline. I'm kind of busy, but did you want to tell me something?" the President asked.

"I just had a nice ride on Macaroni," Caroline said. Macaroni was the name of her pony.

"With your mother?"

"Yes, Daddy. Mummy rode her horse and we had a nice long ride together."

"That's good. Now you'd better run along. I'm very busy."

"All right, Daddy. Good-by."

Caroline said good-by to the other two men and skipped out of the office. Her daddy, the President of the United States, was back hard at work before the door closed behind his little daughter.

At Caroline's bedtime, the President found time as often as he could to read to her. When John-John grew older — when he was nearly three—he climbed into the bed, too, and listened with his sister.

"What shall we read tonight?" the President asked them one evening.

"You *tell* us a story tonight, Daddy," Caroline demanded. John-John nodded his head "yes" a dozen times.

"Now let me see," began their father. "Once upon a time there was a big white whale . . ."

This was the first of many adventures the President told the children about the "big white whale" and the sailor with the wooden leg. The President was making up his own story, but the whale and the sailor were from a famous book he had read in college — *Moby Dick*.

Under President Kennedy, relations between the United States and Russia became much better. In July, 1963, President Kennedy got Russia's Premier Khrushchev to agree to cut down on testing deadly bombs



in the air where radioactive fallout might hurt people — especially children.

Late one afternoon he was discussing this important test ban treaty with his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara. President Kennedy was standing in his Oval Room office. He was looking out over the huge lawn in the rear of the White House. He could see Washington's Monument reaching high into the sky. He suddenly spotted the flash of a white dress on a little girl. It was Caroline. The President stepped out on the balcony for a closer look.

"Caroline," he called. "Caroline! Are you eating candy?"

Caroline didn't answer. She started running for the house.

"Caroline! You know you're not supposed to eat candy right before dinner."

Caroline kept running. As she disappeared into the White House, the President called out his last message to her.

"Caroline, the least you can do is answer me."

Smiling, the President turned to Mr. McNamara and shrugged his shoulders. He had gotten the answer he wanted from Khrushchev on banning the testing of deadly bombs. Getting an answer from Caroline seemed to be harder.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### *An Eternal Flame*

The crowd was cheering.

*"Viva El Presidente!"*

*"Viva Los Americanos!"*

The place was Mexico City. President Kennedy was visiting the President of Mexico. Thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children lined the streets. They pushed against one another to catch a glimpse of America's smiling young President.

*"Viva!"* they shouted in Spanish, meaning, "Long live" the American President.

People all over the free world loved President Kennedy. Everywhere he went, thousands jammed the streets to see him ride by. In Berlin, Germany, the President said in German to a crowd of over one hundred thousand: "I am a Berliner," and the roar of the crowd doubled.

When he said, "I am a Berliner," he meant that he believed the problems of people in one part of the world were important to all people everywhere. He believed in brotherhood. Men everywhere, he strongly felt, should be close and friendly.

And people everywhere showed how much they loved the American President.

The decisions President Kennedy made in the White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., were felt around the world. A farmer in Southern France, a fisherman in Japan, a cowboy in Argentina, all might be affected by President Kennedy's decisions. In the big city of London, the capital of Great Britain, the speeches and actions of President Kennedy were reported in the newspapers as fully as they were in his own country.

All people in the free world liked President Kennedy, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy liked being President.

One afternoon President Kennedy was visited by eight-year-old Eric Sorenson, the son of Theodore Sorenson, President Kennedy's closest adviser.

"I like the White House," the young boy said.

"So do I, Eric," the President replied.

"I want to live here someday," Eric went on.

"Sorry, Eric, you'll have to wait your turn," President Kennedy said with a laugh.

John-John, almost three years old, was hiding under his father's desk. This was his favorite place in his father's office. John-John stuck out his head and peeked at Eric.

"Do you want a piece of gum?" John-John asked.

Eric came over to the desk, bent down, and took a stick of gum from John-John's chubby hand.

"You'll have to go now, boys," the President said.

John-John crawled out from beneath the desk. Ted Sorenson took Eric by one hand and John-John by the other. On the way to the door, John-John looked up at Mr. Sorenson.

"Would you like a piece of gum, too?"

Mr. Sorenson nodded his head. John-John loved chewing gum and loved to give it away. He gave it to White House guards, to Secret Service men, to people who visited his father when he met them, to everyone he talked to or played with.

Children and young people just naturally took to President Kennedy, and he took to them. Every week he received over one thousand letters from boys and girls.

One little girl wrote:

*"Dear Mr. Kennedy:*

*I am eight years old and I'm much interested in your family in the White House.*

*Could you tell me how it is to be President of the states? and having a car that the seats rise up and a plane that is private?"*

An eight-year-old boy wrote:

*"Dear John:*

*Could you tell me how to make money so I can get a go-Kart."*

Even Caroline got a lot of mail. Some weeks she received as many as four hundred letters.

One of President Kennedy's ideas that attracted thousands of young men and women was the Peace Corps. Boys and girls just out of high school offered to join the Peace Corps. So did hundreds and hundreds of young people just out of college. These young men and women were trained and sent all over the world to help out other people.

President Kennedy was the most popular President the United States had had in many years. General Eisenhower, who had been the President just before Kennedy became President, was very popular, too. But

President Kennedy was even more popular with young people than the great general was.

For years and years, boys and girls of today will remember the date, November 22, 1963. So will millions of others throughout the world.

It was a warm, sunny day in Dallas, Texas. President Kennedy was on his way to make a speech. Mrs. Kennedy was sitting at her husband's side in the rear seat of an open automobile. In the smaller seats—jump seats — sat the Governor of Texas, John Connally, and Mrs. Connally. In the front seat rode three Secret Service men. Other Secret Service men trotted along beside and behind the car.

Right behind President Kennedy's car came another, filled with Secret Service men, all there to guard the President's life. Behind this car came one carrying Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson and Mrs. Johnson.

The President, bareheaded and smiling, waved to the cheering crowds as his car rolled through the streets of Dallas.

The open car turned into Commerce Street. From a window high up in a building looking down on the presidential car, a killer took careful aim. He brought his target into the cross-hairs of the telescopic sight on his powerful rifle.

A shot cracked the air.

President Kennedy raised his right hand to his throat. "Oh!" he gasped.

Mrs. Kennedy turned to her husband. She didn't understand the strange sound he made in saying, "Oh!" She didn't know a bullet had torn through his throat.

The bullet struck Governor Connally in the back. The governor slumped forward. Another shot cracked the Dallas air.

The driver of the car slowed. Secret Service men looked wildly around them to see where the shots were coming from.

A third shot split the air. This one struck President Kennedy in the back of his head. A motorcycle patrolman riding beside the car said later, "His head exploded with blood."

"Oh, my God!" Mrs. Kennedy cried out. "They've killed my husband. Jack! Jack!"

Mrs. Kennedy had no thought for her own safety. She did not duck down into the car in case other shots were fired. She scrambled over the long rear deck of the car to help a Secret Service man climb aboard the automobile.



On the way to the hospital, Mrs. Kennedy cradled her husband's bloody head in her lap.

It was one o'clock in Dallas. All radio and television programs were interrupted. Americans were shocked, stunned. They could not believe their ears as they heard radio and TV announcers say:

"The President of the United States has been shot."

Everyone stayed close to his radio or TV set. One hour later — two o'clock — the terrible message came through.

"The President of the United States is dead."

Millions of American eyes were filled with tears.

"I can't believe it."

"It can't have happened."

Those two sentences were said over and over again.

But President Kennedy was dead. President Kennedy was dead, but the Presidency of the United States continued. It had to. Within one hour, Lyndon Baines Johnson was sworn in as the thirty-sixth President of the United States. Standing by his side as President Johnson took the oath of office was Mrs. Kennedy, her dress stained with the blood of her dead husband.

Few people have shown greater bravery than Mrs. Kennedy displayed during those terrible hours. By late afternoon on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy's body was being flown back to Washington. Sitting beside the coffin was Mrs. Kennedy.

*This picture, made moments after the shots were fired, shows President Kennedy's car speeding toward Partland Hospital. White arrow points to the President's foot, black arrow to Mrs. John Connally, wife of the Texas Governor, ducking bullets. A secret serviceman leans over at back.*



Not only the United States, but all the world was shocked and saddened by the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

On the small island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa, an American tourist, his wife, and daughter returned to their hotel. The clerk at the desk was in tears.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Schofield," the clerk said to the tourist. "Your great President has been killed."

In Africa, the Voice of America broadcast the news:

"The President of the United States has been killed."

The same sad message was heard all over the world. And all over the world people were stunned.

In the United States, millions of Americans spent three days listening to their radios, watching television, and reading in their newspapers about the tragedy that had come to the President and to themselves.

On television they saw Kennedy's body lying in state in the Capitol, where three years before he had been sworn in as President.

They saw Mrs. Kennedy and little Caroline approach the casket. They saw the sad wife and her daughter kneel down and kiss the American flag which was draped over it.

Americans wept as they saw the President's body being carried to the church for the funeral service, to the burial grounds in Arlington National Cemetery. They saw little John-John, standing at his mother's side, salute as the casket was carried down the church steps by an honor guard of sailors, soldiers, marines, and air force men.

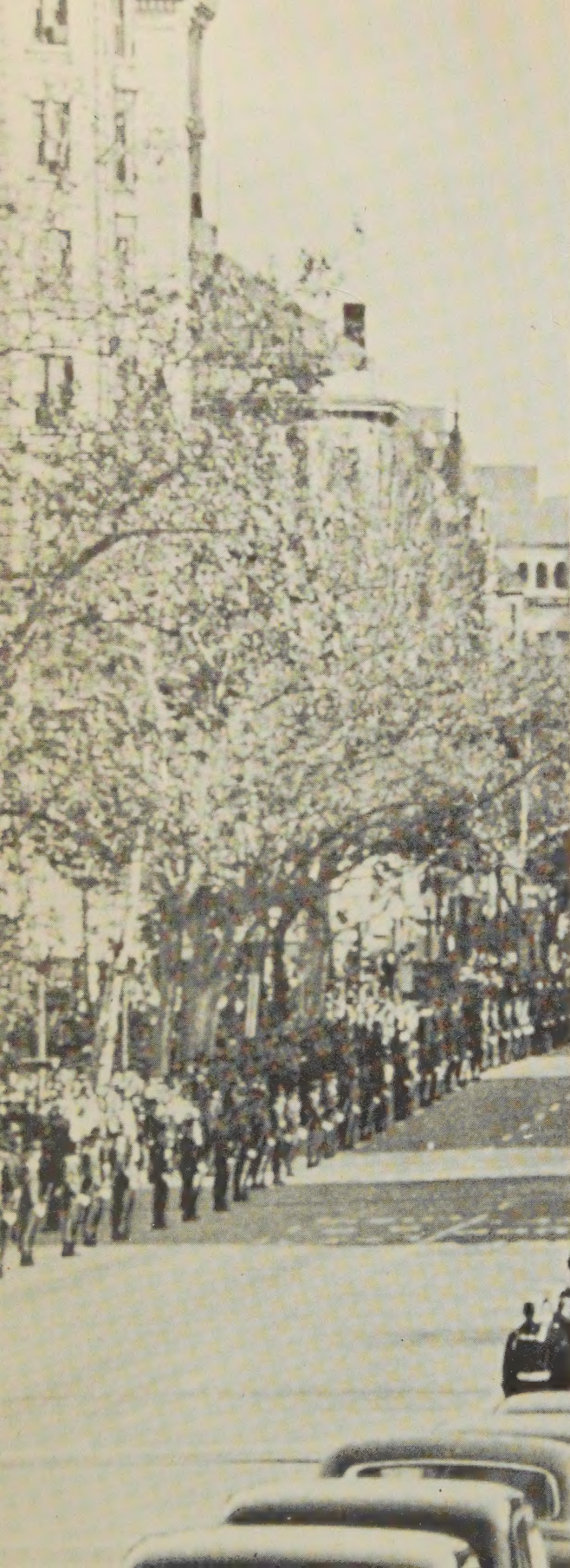
The funeral was attended by kings and princes, presidents and premiers from nations all over the world.

In Arlington National Cemetery, where American heroes lie in their honored graves, an eternal flame burns night and day. It stands at the head of the grave where President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was placed to rest.

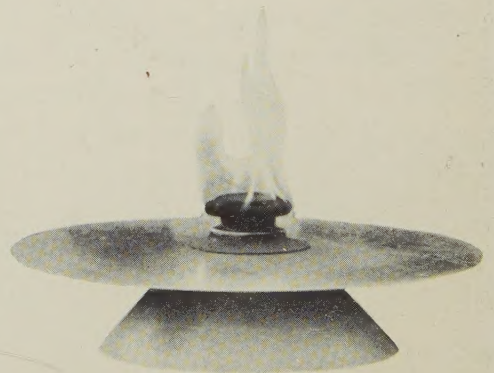
The President's mother had asked for the flame to stand as a symbol of her son's belief in freedom for the whole world. She was, perhaps, remembering what he himself said about all the people of this generation — in America and elsewhere — who are pledged to defend freedom:

*"The energy, the faith and the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it — and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."*



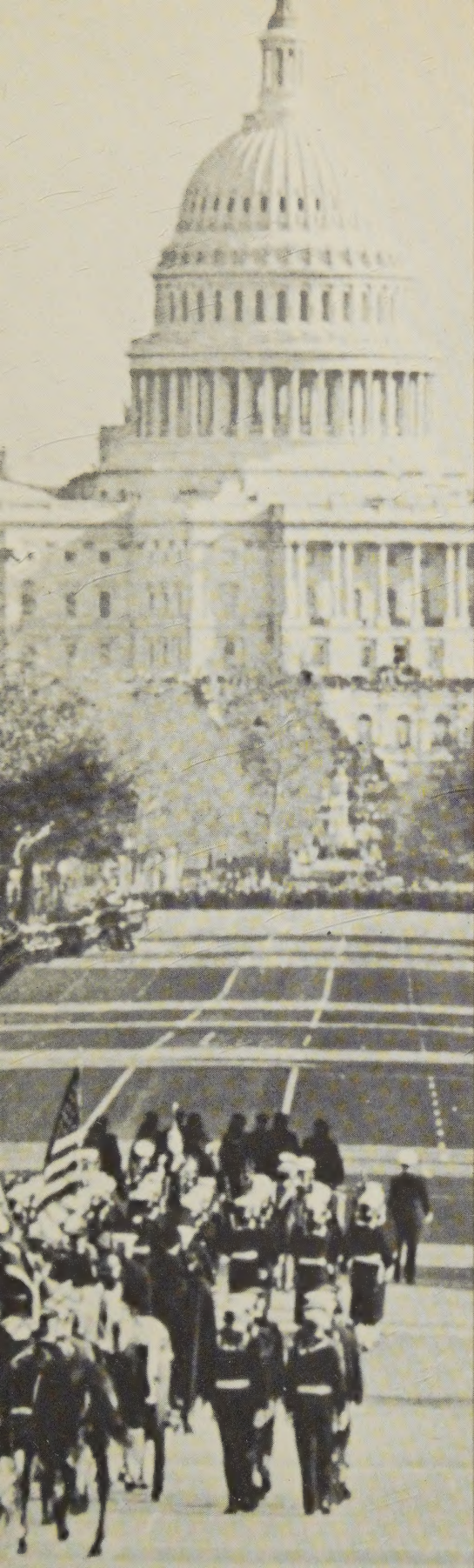


*"The energy, the faith  
and the devotion  
which we bring  
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will light our country  
and all who serve it —  
and the glow  
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can truly light  
the world."*



*The eternal flame burns brightly  
at the grave of John F. Kennedy  
in Arlington National Cemetery.*





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